The Later Heidegger and Contemporary Theology of God

Daniel Martino

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The Later Heidegger and Contemporary Theology of God

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty
of the Department of Theology
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts
Duquesne University
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the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Abstract

Martin Heidegger was a central figure in 20th century Western philosophy. In evaluating his work from the perspective of the early 21st century it is clear that his influence crossed disciplinary lines. This work aims to address one area where Heidegger’s thinking has had tremendous impact – theology. Specifically, Heidegger’s later writings are selectively examined in order to determine the bearing they have on the issue of God.

The route to God, in a strict confessional sense, is neither easy nor direct in the Heideggerian corpus. As a result, the first methodological tack used throughout this study establishes Heidegger’s abiding thematic interests. Only after appreciating the continuity and context of his work can tentative and cautious theological applications be made as the second methodological tack. This approach simultaneously upholds the integrity of Heidegger’s thought and protects the theological discipline from speculative forays antithetical to its mission. The hope is that the later Heidegger will be seen as a productive and engaging dialogue partner for theology. His voice deepens theology’s traditional discourse about God as well as challenges modes of expression that are exclusivistic and ineffectual in the postmodern era.

The following structure exposes the outreach of the later Heideggerian oeuvre to theological thought regarding God. The first two chapters contextualize Heidegger. Chapter one situates Heidegger on the stage of Western philosophy with the distinction of having creatively raised the question of the meaning of Being to a new level of urgency. Chapter two identifies two formative influences from Heidegger’s very early career – phenomenology and a course load involving religious topics.
The third and fourth chapters make connections between the later texts and God. Chapter three introduces the importance of poetry (Hölderlin and Trakl) and the dynamics of poetics. The venturesome poet inhabits the “between” and restores authentic human dwelling as measured against the Godhead. Chapter four further develops Hölderlin’s significance and introduces Nietzsche’s importance for exposing the challenge of godlessness (elusiveness and absence) during the needy time: the gods have fled and God is dead.

The Reprise recapitulates the salient themes presented and recommends promising areas for future research.
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Acknowledgements

While Aristotle was the first to recognize humanity’s inherent social nature – “man is a social animal” – Heidegger went to great lengths to show that our being-with-others (Mitsein) is an indispensable component of the very being of human kind (Dasein). No where does the importance of others realize itself as a formative influence than in the dissertation process. The author becomes a fully human author and brings the task to completion only as a result of being in relationship with significant others who assume varied roles. One of Heidegger’s aims in highlighting the importance of being-with-others in his existential analytic of the being of the human person was to prevent its influence from not being properly acknowledged. To avoid any such oversight in the important contributions that my being-with-others has had, I am fully aware that I could not have completed this lengthy project without the interaction of others who offered unflinching direction, support and encouragement throughout the process.

First and foremost, I must acknowledge and thank the members of my dissertation committee. Dr. William M. Thompson-Uberuaga, the director, offered the original inspiration for the topic. In his hermeneutics course and in several personal conversations he opened my eyes to the value of Heidegger for theology. As the draft of each chapter was submitted, he gave invaluable insight and always encouraged me to continue. He trusted in my abilities to effectively wade through Heidegger’s density when it is easy to get so lost that it becomes hard to tell the Black Forest from the trees. Dr. Marie Baird’s work as a Holocaust scholar and as an expert on Emmanuel Lévinas made me ever conscious of Heidegger’s human foibles. As I wrote, her work offered the necessary challenge surrounding Heidegger’s affiliation with Nazism and the use of his philosophy
for theological purposes. Dr. Clifford’s work in feminist theology and ecotheology influenced my research and writing. There is an ongoing need to be sensitive to any sexist bias present in Heidegger as well as a need to maximize the theological potential lurking in his critique of technology and fascination for the concept of earth. Dr. Worgul has provided numerous insights over the years to make sure that Heidegger’s phenomenology keeps pace with the contemporary intellectual climate of postmodernism and post-structuralism. He also challenged me to find practical outlets for the use Heidegger.

Aside from the committee, I would also like to acknowledge the support and love that I have received from family and friends. My wife, Christine, has stood beside through out every phase of the project. Though the absorption and dissemination of Heidegger’s thought does not readily lend itself to the engineering techniques familiar to her profession, she has nonetheless become a closet Heideggerian and phenomenologist. She patiently sifted through my hieroglyphic handwritten manuscripts and miraculously converted them into polished Word documents. On a vacation in Europe one summer, she kindly indulged me by figuring out a way to devote two entire days to Heideggeriana – one day visiting his hometown of Meßkirch and another at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau and Todnauberg, home of Heidegger’s famous “hut.” I am also grateful to my mother, Gaye, who provided encouragement and allowed me to take over an entire spare room in her home to use as a work space for the dissertation. That room can now return to a state of normalcy free of books and photocopied periodical literature strewn about and aired out from the remnants of dank cigar smoke. My extended family, the Marmos, must also be acknowledged for the right amount of teasing they provided regarding the
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A dissertation like a person is finally an expression of many people. To be sure the people mentioned above, as well as many who are not directly mentioned, may not recognize themselves in this project, but I can assure them that they are all there.
Introduction

There is one problem, however, that we resolutely avoid the problem of God. This is not because there is nothing to say about God in Heidegger’s thinking. On the contrary, it is because there is too much to say…

— William J. Richardson, S.J.
*Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*

William J. Richardson issues this disclaimer at the beginning of his classic work on Martin Heidegger. At first glance this dissertation appears to ignore the warning that Richardson sounds. However this is not the case in the more flippant sense that everything that was ever said or referred to by Heidegger relative to the God question will now be fully exposed. This verges on the absurd and would be a gross injustice to both the theology of God and the thinking of Heidegger. Nonetheless this work takes a bold step. It selectively examines the later writings of Heidegger in order to discover what they say to the contemporary theology of God.

At many junctures where Heidegger’s philosophizing interfaces with theology’s God great caution will be exercised. Once all due respect is paid to the integrity of Heidegger’s work and to the discipline of theology, well-grounded speculations will be advanced regarding what Heidegger offers for theology’s tentative embrace. This work will show that the assets that the later Heidegger has to offer to the God issue far outweigh any liabilities, especially in the postmodern era as Heidegger challenges theology to think deeply about its presuppositions concerning God.

To the attentive and patient ear, Heidegger invites theology to think about God in new ways. Though the route from his later writings to theological application is always ponderous and indirect, the invitation to re-think God is not accomplished by adopting
any form of iconoclasm or obscurantism. Rather the overall approach consistently centers on the careful development of two issues germane to the theological enterprise.

The first issue addresses the relationship between Being and God. Since this has a long-standing precedent throughout the course of Western theology and philosophy, it becomes a point of easy compatibility for initial attempts to join Heidegger’s concern for Being and theology’s discourse about God. While Heidegger demythologizes and deconstructs the metaphysical ways used to study the question of the meaning of Being, he does not destroy foundations aimlessly or maliciously. Raising the Being question anew will have a salutary effect upon humanity as it forces a redirection of thought to the overlooked mystery of sheer “isness” (Being) and away from the entrenched, comfortable focus on “things” (beings) and their manipulation (Chapter One). Moreover, the attempt to reexamine the question of the meaning of Being in novel ways will impact upon the question of the meaning of God, since the study of God has been part of the metaphysical tradition.

The second issue relevant to theology which acts as a focal point entertains the elusiveness and absence of God. Among the many corollary issues that this raises, it speaks directly to the alienation resulting from humankind’s preoccupation with things in a scientistic-technological culture. What happens to God, the Holy, or the Sacred in such an era? God consciousness has somehow been compromised and the resultant feeling of God’s absence or indifference holds sway. Thus, it is a “needy time” of seeking and yearning for a genuine understanding of God in order to quell the existential anxiety associated with a sense of godlessness. This anxiety finds expression in contemporary humanity’s widespread sense of homelessness. Efforts to restore a rooted sense of
dwelling will be achieved as humankind poetically measures itself against the Godhead (Chapter Three).

Heidegger offers theology direction in this challenging epoch of God’s elusiveness and absence by recourse to Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich Nietzsche. This poet and philosopher, though atypical theological resources, do in fact confront God’s plight in meaningful ways. Heidegger points out the merit that Hölderlin and Nietzsche hold for theological dialogue, but due to the indirect and dense style of his commentary, an ample dose of patience and openness is necessary. In the end, however, God and God’s mysterious ways can be better glimpsed with the result that absence is greatly tempered and elusiveness is placed in a context of hope (Chapter Four).

Before Heidegger relied heavily on the wisdom of Hölderlin and Nietzsche to address the issue of the gods’/God’s hiddenness and elusiveness, very early in his career he resorted to the event of the Parousia. The first Christians lived in a tensile time of God’s quasi-absence between Jesus’ resurrection/ascension and his Second Coming (Chapter Two). While this is a rare instance where Heidegger’s discussion of God is direct and relies on traditional theological sources, i.e., Paul’s letters to the Galatians and Thessalonians, there is never an attempt throughout the dissertation to baptize Heidegger for confessional or creedal purposes. Instead the consistent approach remains in the spirit of a hermeneutics of generosity (Paul Ricoeur), whereby Heidegger is first allowed to speak for himself and then theological extrapolations are attempted with great care and diligence.

It is hoped that this project will demonstrate that careful attention to the later writings of Heidegger on the Being question and on the elusive/absent gods/God dynamic
will serve to deepen and enrich the contemporary theological enterprise concerned with achieving relevant and credible discourse about God.
CHAPTER ONE: The Later Heidegger and His Unique Philosophical Contributions to Western Thinking

I do not wish to persuade anyone to philosophy: it is inevitable and perhaps also desirable that the philosopher should be a rare plant.

This intriguing quote from Friedrich Nietzsche’s *The Will to Power* is cited by Martin Heidegger at the outset of his *Nietzsche*, a four volume compilation of lectures and manuscripts from 1936-1946. Though Heidegger limited his interpretation here to a single philosophical principle – the will to power – this significant work from his “later” period has been assessed as presenting the most comprehensive and self-enclosed interpretation of Nietzsche yet produced.¹

While this dissertation humbly acknowledges its proper scope and makes no such similar claim to be a definitive interpretation of Heidegger, it nonetheless recognizes the wisdom of embracing such a quote to best situate Heidegger upon the scene of Western philosophy. As Heidegger keenly perceived Nietzsche’s insightfulness regarding the quality of “rareness” that the philosopher should possess as a fitting start to his treatment of Nietzsche’s unique legacy to Western thought, so too this project begins with an appreciation of Nietzsche’s acumen by applying it to Heidegger. He was without question a “rare” plant who entered upon the stage of Western philosophy and with his thinking left a distinctive mark of hybrid proportion.

What is it that makes Heidegger such a rare plant? There are as many answers to this question as there are commentators on Heidegger’s work, each one’s estimation directly influenced by the interests of their respective efforts. Since both the resources and aim of this dissertation are by necessity finite, it is imperative that identifying and presenting Heidegger’s rareness be selective and purposeful.
In order to be meaningfully discriminating in naming Heidegger’s contribution to Western philosophy, it will be important to not merely selectively canvass reputable authorities as to their informed opinions about Heidegger’s significance, rather it will be more effective and poignant to balance such interpretations with Heidegger’s own diagnosis of and prognosis for the philosophical scene he inhabits. At first sight this tack may appear flawed and fraught with danger, since it runs the risk of inviting a more or less subjective autobiographical account to supplant the rigors derived from objective sources. However, such a potential danger can be avoided if the motivation for such an approach is clearly set forth and openly accepted.

The aim of this entire work, and this chapter specifically with its goal to situate Heidegger on the scene of Western philosophy, is not to create an occasion where he is so glowingly fêted that his eventual contact with theology is then sanguinely viewed as a blissful marriage without any trace of an irreconcilable difference. It is hoped instead that the motive at the beginning of this current project – and throughout as the focus shifts – will be one of allowing Heidegger to speak for himself in the primary texts. This will foster a genuine appreciation for what he is actually saying at a certain point about the condition of Western thought. With such an appreciation cultivated a better foundation will have been laid to evince possible positive implications for contemporary theologies of God.

Before Heidegger is cued to the mark to deliver his soliloquy about the vicissitudes of Western philosophy, it would be common courtesy to have a few worthy commentators act as moderators introducing the keynote speaker. In the eyes of these interpreters, What makes Heidegger such a “rare” plant of a philosopher whose yield for
the discipline of philosophy is a bumper crop? While the qualifications for each of the following three philosophers to competently judge Heidegger’s contributions could be readily established, the overriding reason for their selection here was the fact that each of them were associates of Heidegger who benefited from the effects of direct personal contact with him. Their critical analyses of his rarity possess a unique level of credibility since each had the opportunity to engage Heidegger, the philosopher, on the issue of philosophy.

Hans-Georg Gadamer: The Meaning and Truth of Being Masterfully Thought

Hans-Georg Gadamer writing on Heidegger’s eightieth birthday in 1969 felt that it was the appropriate occasion to give thanks to the philosopher whose thought had been having impact for fifty years at that point in time. Because of the immensity and diversity of Heidegger’s thought, Gadamer honestly admits of the perplexity surrounding the desire to arrive at a specific way to gratefully acknowledge Heidegger’s largesse. Nevertheless, he is enabled to reach a conclusion because he was an intimate of Heidegger’s: “A witness says what is and what is true. So the witness, who is speaking here, is permitted to say what everyone who encountered Martin Heidegger has experienced: He is a master of thinking, of that unfamiliar art of thinking.”

For Gadamer, therefore, Heidegger’s arrival upon the scene of Western philosophy ushered in a new level of “seriousness” for the business of thinking and for this Heidegger is owed a debt of gratitude. This is not the proper place to delve into a detailed discussion of the rich nuances Heidegger offers about various modes of thinking, i.e., “meditative/essential” and “calculative” thought. Rather, fostering an appreciation
for what specifically lies behind Gadamer’s claim that a new art of thinking is introduced by Heidegger is what is necessary at this point.

What is so distinctive about the kind of thinking that Heidegger initiated is that his was a thinking “that attempted to think the very beginning and beginnings.”\(^3\) Gadamer is clear, however, that Heidegger’s thinking the beginnings maintains a uniqueness from many other philosophers who preceded him in their quest for beginnings. For instance, Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology and mentor to Heidegger, could also be credited for searching for a “‘beginning’ as an ultimate foundation that would allow for a systematic ordering of all philosophical propositions.”\(^4\) According to Gadamer, however, Heidegger’s mission to think the beginnings was aimed at a much deeper originality. This is because Heidegger embraced the “haziness” of life in contrast with Husserl who wanted phenomenology to be methodologically foundational as a rigorous science that could ultimately advance the principle of the transcendental subject as the “beginning” of philosophy.

It is not so much that Heidegger’s genius as a thinker rests on his having secured a more primordial principle than Husserl, et al., that would then be the ultimate beginning to whom philosophy would pay homage to the thinker who finally arrived at true origin or ground. As a matter of fact, this would be a thanksgiving recognition that would cause Heidegger to bristle! Such a possible reaction is clearly evidenced in one of his seminal later writings entitled *The Principle of Reason* (1957), where Heidegger is found performing a methodical critique of the long-standing philosophical obsession to discover and ascribe grounds or reasons for everything (“*Satz vom Grund*”):

> Without exactly knowing it, in some manner we are constantly addressed by, summoned to attend to, grounds and reason...We constantly have, as it were, the principle of reason in view: *nihil est*
Therefore, Gadamer concurs with his former University of Marburg professor when he speaks with qualifications about the rareness of Heidegger best identified as a philosopher who set a new standard for thinking about beginnings.

While Gadamer’s testimony is helpful and penetrating in the effort to better grasp Heidegger’s uniqueness, it nonetheless leaves the question begging, “What ‘beginning’ did Heidegger nudge philosophy to think?” Because this question can be answered with such swiftness and ease, it almost borders on stating the obvious. Nevertheless, it is Heidegger’s own oft-stated mission, as well as the near unanimous opinion of his supporters and detractors, that it is the question of the meaning and truth of Being that must be thought anew. Complementing Gadamer’s insight, it can be said that with Heidegger’s entrance upon the scene of Western thinking, there is a clarion call to radically rethink the origins of the Being question.

By thoughtfully examining the “beginnings” of the manner in which philosophy set out to understand Being, there is the promise of gaining a clarity and appreciation for the trajectory of the 2,500 year course of Western thought that brought it to its current state. Herein lies yet another mark of Heidegger’s rareness as a standout philosopher in over two millennia of history and tradition. His uniqueness, however, is not based on some facile notion that his promptings urge thinking to go back and rethink the beginning of the thought of Being in order to finally get it right. This would be reminiscent of Friedrich Schleiermacher’s hermeneutical dictum that one should strive to understand the author’s text better than the author did. Such a reading would be a gross misunderstanding of Heidegger as well as Gadamer’s testament to Heidegger’s rareness.
It is not thinking about the *beginnings* of Being but rather *thinking* about the beginnings of Being and ultimately better understanding where that has led today which is a genuine contribution without parallel among other Western European thinkers.

**Karl Löwith: Questioning Being with Piety in a “Needy Time”**

Another esteemed associate of Heidegger’s, Karl Löwith, is now brought forth to further corroborate and fine-tune Gadamer’s suggestions about Heidegger’s distinctiveness. Löwith offers a nuance that succinctly permits an appreciation of the rare plant that Heidegger was for philosophy vis-à-vis rethinking the meaning of Being. Writing on the occasion of Heidegger’s seventieth birthday as an apt time to critically evaluate his influence, Löwith is vexed not merely over the general ambiguity of Heidegger’s influence, but more specifically by his convictions to questioningly think Being, “Why does this highly exacting ‘thinking of Being’ have such a general appeal…?”

This question at once builds upon Gadamer’s wisdom and at the same time reaches to the heart of the matter regarding Heidegger’s rare approach to the question of Being. The real lure of the questioning thinking of Being lies in the fact that Heidegger invites thought about Being in terms of “time,” no pun intended toward his *magnum opus, Being and Time*. For Löwith, this is not merely an invitation to abstractly juxtapose two key philosophical concepts such as Being and time with the hope of achieving a better understanding of each. Rather it is his contention that Heidegger’s genius in thinking the Being question resides in a thinking that responds to the perplexities of the current era.
Heidegger believed that the present age can be best described as a “needy time” (dürftige Zeit). The “neediness” which permeates the spirit of the times is a destitution of sorts, whereby a twofold lack holds sway: “It is the time of the gods that have fled (fehl Gottes) and of the God that is coming. It is a time of need, because it lies under a double lack and a double not: the no-more of the gods and the not yet of the God that is coming.”\(^8\) The obvious theological overtones coming through in this passage are manifest, but the actual parsing of this quote for possible implication redounding to the God question must be postponed to the last chapters of this dissertation when the due care that such an analysis requires can be fully exercised. Right now it is important to appreciate Löwith’s attestation of Heidegger’s rareness for philosophy in general. So far, Löwith is clear that to truly respect the novelty of Heidegger’s agenda to resurrect the Being question it must be contextualized within today’s needy time. But to extrapolate even further, attention must also be paid to the religious reverberations that typify the neediness of today. This for Löwith is what firmly secures for Heidegger the moniker of rareness in the annals of philosophy. Therefore, in addition to Gadamer’s contention that Heidegger’s legacy is best noted by the new standard of thinking set forth for the age old question of Being comes Löwith’s belief that at the root of this program of artful thinking lies a religious motive. It is not blatant or confessional, but Löwith maintains that the only reason why Heidegger receives a hearing and can uniquely capture imaginations with such an abstract topic like Being is that there is a “piety” that vivifies his musings. This can have a unique broad based appeal, whether or not it is consciously acknowledged:

the basis that serves as the background for everything said by Heidegger, and permits many to take notice and listen attentively, is something unsaid: the religious motive, which has surely detached itself
from Christian faith, but which precisely on account of its dogmatically unattached indeterminacy appeals all the more to those who are no longer faithful Christians but who nonetheless would like to be religious.9

Ascribing piety to thought in general is not the doing of Löwith alone but in actuality is an association made by Heidegger. In discussing the essence of technology in another key later text, “The Question Concerning Technology,” Heidegger concludes the essay, after having laboriously examined the essence of both ancient and modern technology, with the lapidary statement, “…questioning is the piety of thought.”10 Though a more complete exposition of Heidegger’s thoughts on thinking must wait, it is advantageous at this juncture to at least begin to perceive the reverential respect that Heidegger accords to human thinking. Thought possesses a certain degree of piety for several reasons, yet one of the more telling summary expressions which indicates the rationale underlying the need to approach thinking with a due sense of respect points to recognizing the proper sequence by which thought wells up in the thinker, “We never come to thoughts. They come to us.”11

With such an assertion there is no need to be misled into a feeling of bewilderment, since Heidegger’s suggestions about the true source for human thinking are not to be found in some ephemeral deus ex machina, but rather in the primary focus of his life’s work – Being. It is Heidegger’s belief that at the initiative of Being a dynamic relationship is established between itself and human thought, “[t]hat Being itself, and the manner in which Being itself, strikes a man’s [sic] thinking, that rouses his thinking and stirs it to rise from Being itself to respond and correspond to Being as such.”12 A true indication of the health of the relationship between human thinking and Being is metered by the extent to which thought responds to the initial overtures of
Being. If thought neglects to make Being its primary focus of interest, then a mark of infidelity and misdirection mars the relationship. However, if thinking allows its energies to be wholeheartedly directed to an ever-refined attunement to Being, then a right relationship of harmony and accord obtains, “[T]hinking is not a means to gain knowledge. Thinking cuts furrows into the soil of Being.”¹³

Therefore important strands of continuity are detectable in the effort to discern Heidegger’s rare status in philosophy by soliciting two of his prominent colleagues, Gadamer and Löwith. Gadamer gives a nod to Heidegger’s uniqueness based on the qualitatively new level of thinking that his project introduced, while Löwith avers that this artful thinking is predicated by the *Zeitgeist* as an endeavor with overtones of piety. Explicit in both of these evaluations is the connection to Heidegger’s thoroughgoing energies to revisit the question of the meaning of Being. The “master of thinking” artfully redirects the gaze of Western philosophy to think “the very beginning and beginnings” relative to the truth of Being (Gadamer) at a most *apropos* time of twofold “need” or destitution; since the gods have fled and the God who is yet to come forces a vigilant period of waiting and watching, thus coloring the entire reemergence of the Being question with a sense of piety (Löwith).

More implicit in the estimations of Gadamer and Löwith is the semblance that perhaps something has been awry in the manner of philosophy’s thinking about Being. After all, if Heidegger is to receive accolades of distinction as the person who masterfully rerouted the thinking of Being in an age of malaise, then this must have been necessary. So, hovering about the astute observations of Gadamer and Löwith is an indictment against Western philosophy and, for Heidegger, its alter ego Western metaphysics.
It will be more fully developed below that Heidegger was critical of the course that Western metaphysics had taken relative to its study of the truth and meaning of Being. However, to avoid the likely implication here that Heidegger was a radical deconstructionist who iconoclastically jettisoned the entire tradition of Western philosophy, it is helpful to examine the observations of another interpreter of Heidegger, Walter Biemel. Biemel, a former student of Heidegger’s, will be the final philosopher consulted to bring the objective refinement of Heidegger’s rareness to a completion. Rounding out the reason that Gadamer and Löwith advance regarding Heidegger’s distinctive contribution to philosophy is the perspicacious appraisal of Biemel. He will not merely present an additional verse in the song of praise, but will instead bring added clarity to the problematic of metaphysics, or the entire course of Western philosophy since Plato and Aristotle that has elusively been part of the previous estimations offered by Gadamer and Löwith.

Writing an essay for an anthology devoted to addressing both the complexity and simplicity of Heidegger’s thought and life, *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, Biemel admits the difficulty attendant upon speaking about the unique influence of any thinker, let alone a thinker of Heidegger’s magnitude. Possible avenues to pursue that might alleviate the burden of inadequately representing Heidegger’s legacy would be to perfunctorily cite how his influence has spread geographically beyond Western Europe to all parts of the world. In a similar vein, a case could be made to show how Heidegger’s
thinking has had influence intellectually upon the most diverse disciplines, from psychiatry, medicine and psychology to philosophy, art, history, and theology.\textsuperscript{14}

However, Biemel protests that in both instances where recourse is either made to Heidegger’s transcontinental notoriety or to his interdisciplinary prowess, there is a falling short of actually reaching the heart of Heidegger’s authentic rareness. Instead there must be a shift of the investigation away from concentrating on geographic or disciplinary conquests, since at their bases rests Heidegger’s diagnosis and prognosis for Western thinking, “…what will let us see the uniqueness of his [Heidegger’s] thought is the question: What is Heidegger’s position on metaphysics? and linked with this first question there is a second: What does Heidegger mean by saying that, in the future, thinking will no longer be philosophy?”\textsuperscript{15}

Beimel’s commentary is pertinent at this point of the chapter on several scores. First, it neatly supplements the efforts of the foregoing observers who sought to answer the question, “What makes Heidegger a \textit{rare} plant?” Moreover, it does so in a manner that furthers the aim of fostering some sense of continuity. Since Heidegger’s rare contribution to Western thought has innumerable facets, there must be some way to synthetically present the most salient features in order to manageably and intelligently arrive at an appreciation of Heidegger’s hybridism. Gadamer claimed that philosophy should be most grateful to Heidegger because of his insistence that the timeless Being question must be the recipient of a new serious yet artful thinking. To this, Löwith adds the nuance that Heidegger’s invitation to rethink the meaning of Being displays a rarity because of its timeliness. To engage Being in a questioningly thoughtful way today assumes a connotation of piety because of the ambivalence surrounding the presence of
the gods or God. Advancing questions about Being’s meaning along the lines of rigorous thought is suffused with an aura of piety and wonder.

Biemel comes to the fore to deepen the previous stances with his assertions that Heidegger’s uniqueness can best be gleaned from what he has left behind in his treatment of metaphysics. Heidegger is clear on numerous occasions that since its classical inception with Plato and Aristotle, Western philosophy has delineated its inquiry in terms of the question “τι τὸ ὑπό τοῦ” (“What is Being?”). This builds upon Gadamer and Löwith’s claims that the resurgence of the question of the meaning of Being with a posture of thoughtful piety is actually a variant continuation within a long line of tradition. As intimiated above, this tradition has been typically categorized under the broad banner of “metaphysics,” and Heidegger is most comfortable in making a straightforward equation between the Western philosophical tradition in toto and metaphysics, “to inquire into the ἀρχή – to ask the question “τι τὸ ὑπό τοῦ?” (“What is Being?”) – is metaphysics.”

Care must be taken not to overlook the corollary statement that Biemel makes in conjunction with his main declaration that Heidegger’s rarity is best garnered from his position on metaphysics. Biemel invites a further reflection on the meaning attached to Heidegger’s belief that philosophy has seemingly come to an “end,” “What does Heidegger mean by saying that, in the future, thinking will no longer be philosophy?” This helps to stress a point that has already surfaced and will receive a further elucidation; namely, that Heidegger feels called upon to diagnose the condition of Western metaphysics up to the point of his own involvement with it, as well as to make a prognosis about its future well-being. In these evaluative efforts, it will become clear that Heidegger is going beyond the mere presentation of the history of philosophy, and
instead is striving for a new understanding of metaphysics in its totality. This, for Biemel, is what truly distinguishes Heidegger’s position on metaphysics.

Biemel concedes that lurking behind Heidegger’s ability to render a novel appropriation of the entire course of philosophical tradition in the West was the question about Being: “What made it possible for Heidegger to offer this new interpretation of the whole of metaphysics from Plato to Nietzsche was the understanding which opened up to him along with the question about Being.” Again, there is a marked continuity among the various expert opinions sought out here to determine what makes Heidegger a “rare” plant of a philosopher. While each one offers an estimation of what makes Heidegger unique, they can all be seen as important variations on the single theme of Being. Whether deference is given to Gadamer’s contention that it was Heidegger’s desire to encourage a new rigorous type of thinking, or whether an option is made for Löwith’s belief that the current era’s nihilistic tendencies require a dimension of piety when thinking, they are both surrounded and supported by Heidegger’s agenda to force a reexamination of the meaning and truth of Being. Biemel then concludes along these lines after offering his own proposal that Heidegger’s legacy should be tied to the new understanding of metaphysics he put forth, “To show this referral to Being, to make man [sic] attentive to it – that was the one concern which moved Heidegger in everything he said and did.”

Heidegger’s Interpretation of Western Philosophy

Having surveyed three credible sources in order to better appreciate how Heidegger lives up to Nietzsche’s insistence that the philosopher should be a “rare plant,” the chapter is poised well to proceed further in the exposition of its overall aim – situating
Heidegger upon the scene of Western thought. Gadamer, Löwith, and Biemel each
served well in the capacity of “moderator” by offering informed suggestions as to what
makes Heidegger’s entrée into the philosophical tradition distinctive. However it is now
appropriate to ask Heidegger to take to the dais alone, so as to allow him to speak in a
concentrated and undivided way about his purpose and place in the centuries old tradition
of Western philosophy. Thus far, tangential snippets of Heidegger’s thought were
interspersed throughout the earlier parts of the chapter as a means to bolster the positions
of Gadamer, Löwith, and Biemel. The remainder of the chapter, however, will be a
reversal of this method. It will be Heidegger’s thought itself that will be explicated in a
very focused manner with reputable commentary from secondary sources used sparingly
to refine certain complex points.

“My whole work in lectures and exercises in the past thirty years has been in the
main only an interpretation of Western philosophy.”

Heidegger uttered these words during the course of an interview with journalists from the German magazine *Der Spiegel* on September 23, 1966. The remark arose amidst the reporters’ questions concerning the changing role that philosophy plays in affecting human thought in an era dominated by technology and science. Although this topic is really only a footnote to the overall significance of this rare interview, the admission by Heidegger serves as a lodestar for the course of this dissertation. Most directly, toward the aim of the present chapter it accords Heidegger the opportunity to situate his work and himself upon the vast scheme of Western philosophy.

His efforts are to be seen as “an interpretation” of Western philosophy. Though he does not attach the label of “unique” or “distinctive” to the interpretation he has
rendered, by sheer appreciation of the gravity of the Der Spiegel interview for Heidegger studies, it could be concluded that this was a self-disclosure of great moment. According to Heidegger’s strictest instructions, the interview was not to be made public until after his death. The main reason for this request centered on the fact that the primary purpose of the interview was to provide a forum for Heidegger to speak publicly about his ties to the Nazi party in the early 1930s while serving as Rector at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau. Even though Heidegger grants the interview in the Fall of 1966, his voice on the matter is not known until nearly ten years later when he dies on May 26, 1976 and Der Spiegel subsequently prints the interview on May 31, 1976.

There is no attempt to be dismissive of the fact that Heidegger was a Nazi, as this topic will be delved into later at a more appropriate time, rather it is more of an effort to convey the bearing Heidegger’s remarks have for furthering the goal of the present chapter. Because of Heidegger’s guardedness which meant that the contents of the interview would be published only posthumously, he is no doubt carefully weighing his words realizing that what he says in the interview will serve as a broad based last will and testament of sorts, Der Spiegel by no means being an organ of communication restricted to the esoteric interests of the academic community. To anyone who would be interested, Heidegger is stating the way he would like his work to be remembered within the grand scheme of philosophy, “in main only an interpretation of Western philosophy.”

To become more conversant with this “interpretation” will be the aim of the remainder of this chapter. This will be respectful to Heidegger’s wishes of how best to capture his “rare” contribution to philosophy, as well as methodologically strategic for the advancement of the overall purpose of the dissertation, since there can really be no
responsible and competent exchange between Heidegger’s philosophy and the contemporary theology of God until some appreciation is had for his place in Western thought in general.

In a more remote way, this admission of Heidegger’s to the Der Spiegel reporters promotes the overall aim of the dissertation by sharpening the parameters of the period of Heidegger’s work that is to remain of central focus throughout, “My whole work in lectures and exercises in the past thirty years…” It is Heidegger’s own testimony that from 1936 to 1966 he has been working toward an interpretation of Western philosophy. This helps to validate the tack taken in this entire work as one that is firmly rooted in what can be called with qualifications the “later” period of Heidegger’s career. A more careful analysis will take place concerning the implications surrounding the division of Heidegger’s work into the two broad temporal categories of “early” and “late.” But for the present moment it is essential to realize that the special focus on the “later” Heidegger is being heeded at the outset in trying to contextualize Heidegger and his interpretive analysis of philosophy into the tradition of Western philosophy.

What Is Philosophy?

There are several ways to proceed in order to comprehend better the many aspects of Heidegger’s “interpretation” of Western philosophy, which he modestly reveals consumed most of his energies in the latter portion of his career. However, the route selected here is one that not only serves the practical aim of beginning at a manageable point but also more profoundly resonates with Heidegger’s own bidding. At certain instances within that thirty-year time frame of Heidegger’s arduous discernment toward
an interpretation of Western philosophy, he is seen in clear and certain terms posing the question, “What is philosophy?” In other words, in trying to arrive at an interpretation of philosophy a point is reached where all sorts of sophisticated means are abandoned in favor of the candor that a direct question like “What is philosophy?” may produce.

Heidegger does not chronologically begin his quest for an interpretation of philosophy in such a broad manner, yet since he does punctuate his three decades of interpretive formulations with general definitions of philosophy, it is certainly in keeping with his spirit and also conducive for creating an accessible point of entry for the current efforts of this chapter to begin this way.

In 1935 at the University of Freiburg, Heidegger delivered a series of lecture courses that were eventually compiled for publication in 1953 under the title *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. The author of a recent introductory monograph helps to highlight the significance of this work as Heidegger’s initial venture into his “later” phase. According to Richard Polt, these lecture courses were so rich and fully constructed that Heidegger recommended their use as a preface to *Being and Time*, the 1927 *magnum opus* capstoning his early period, in the event that a second and expanded edition were ever released.\(^{21}\) The lectures could act as prefatory material since they were most illuminating about the question of the meaning of Being, thus setting the proper tone for the genuine intent of *Being and Time* so often misconstrued as merely a sophisticated anthropological study.

In observing the definition of philosophy that Heidegger proffers in the initial pages of this important later work, it is clear that he invests philosophy with some rather lofty expectations:
What philosophy essentially can and must be is this: a thinking that breaks the paths and opens the perspectives of the knowledge that sets the norms and hierarchies, of the knowledge in which and by which a people fulfills itself historically and culturally, the knowledge that kindles and necessitates all inquiries and thereby threatens all values.²²

Because this definition, quasi mission statement, contains a welter of significant themes for better appreciating Heidegger’s overall project as well as philosophy’s outlook, only a thorough analysis could really do justice to all of its nuances with the result of steering this chapter completely off its course. Dutifully respecting the present boundaries, however, it is still possible to acknowledge the germane aspects of this statement on philosophy.

On the one hand, by paying careful attention to the correlation that is established between thinking and philosophy, an earlier thematic thread is tugged upon suggested by Gadamer whereby Heidegger’s “rareness” is best identified by the masterful thinking he engendered for philosophy. A proper thinking linked with philosophy can have far reaching effects according to Heidegger’s definition since it “breaks the paths and opens perspectives” that can define a people in a particular era in an unrestricted way.

On the other hand, this grand mission statement for philosophy allows Heidegger an opportunity to speak for himself about the promising realities of philosophy. This balances the backward glancing weight of the previous insight by projecting forward to themes that often need this reminder to maintain their correctness and integrity. For example, soon to appear out of the horizon of this chapter will be important topics such as Heidegger’s call to “destroy” the fundamental project of ontology, to “overcome” metaphysics, and his pronouncement that philosophy has reached its “end.” Without the awareness of Heidegger’s belief that philosophy steeped in a genuine thinking can
achieve great ends, it would be easy to quickly label him as a rabid deconstructionist hell-bent on relegating Western thinking to the wastelands of obsolescence. Keeping this glowing statement of Heidegger’s about philosophy’s prospects issued as he launches into his later period will help to level off the connotative force expressions like “deconstruction,” “overcoming,” and “end” can exert when qualifying the plight of philosophy.

Having set forth Heidegger’s broad “working definition” of philosophy and what it is capable of accomplishing in grand style, it is now necessary to present Heidegger’s more circumscribed understanding of what lies at the basis of philosophy’s ability to attain such illustrious ends which redounds to the norms of knowledge typifying a generation. Philosophy can only “break paths and open perspectives” of knowledge if its thinking retains an awe-struck attentiveness to Being.

This circumscribed yet essential definition of philosophy comes through in another key text of the later period entitled *What Is Philosophy?* This lecture was given at a meeting of French philosophers in Cérisy-la-Salle, Normandy in August 1955, and so traverses nearly twenty years along the path of Heidegger’s later period in respect to *An Introduction to Metaphysics*’ broad based definition of philosophy. George Kovacs, whose work in part has been focused on Heidegger’s relation to theology and the issue of God, has remarked that, “an insightful meditation on the meaning of philosophy for Heidegger can be found in his *Was is das – die Philosophie? [What Is Philosophy?]*.”

After discussing the origin of Western philosophy, its basic concern from the beginning, and its history from the pre-Socratics to Marx and Nietzsche, Heidegger
explains his conception of philosophy as an attuned correspondence with Being pervaded by a sense of wonder:

Philosophia is the expressly accomplished correspondence which speaks in so far as it considers the appeal of the Being of being. [...]insofern es auf den Zuspruch des Seins des Seinenden achtet]. The correspondence listens to the voice of the appeal. What appeals to us as the voice of Being evokes our correspondence.24

True to his style, Heidegger’s definition of philosophy is laden with a great deal of dense qualifications; however, the main thrust rings out clearly that philosophy should be an endeavor that is in constant communication with Being which will in turn further an understanding of its truth and meaning. Being speaks to listening thinkers through language as they philosophize, and as long as there are no major interferences or distractions in this communication dynamic, then the true mission of philosophy is being adhered to and advanced.

An important component to this attuned linguistic interchange between Being and the thinker is wonder or astonishment (das Erstaunen). In one regard, Heidegger’s promotion of the necessity of wonder for philosophy could be seen as an act of homage to his Greek predecessor Plato, who made a similar claim that philosophy begins with wonder (to thaumazein).25 However, Heidegger’s persistent extolling of the role of wonder throughout his writings distinguishes his perception of wonder’s enduring significance:

“astonishment (das Erstaunen) is archê – it pervades every step of philosophy. Astonishment is pathos…if we translate pathos with tuning (Stimmung), by which we mean dis-position and determination…Thus, astonishment is disposition in which the Being of beings (Sein des Seinenden) unfolds. Astonishment is the tuning within which the Greek philosophers were granted the correspondence to the Being of beings.”26
Wonder as the motivating and sustaining force behind philosophy’s attuned correspondence with Being is reminiscent of Löwith’s assertions cited earlier concerning Heidegger’s “rareness.” It was an unspoken “religious motive” that enabled Heidegger’s fixation on an otherwise abstract topic like Being to capture the imagination of so many. Heidegger nudges philosophy to think Being in the now wondrous “needy” time “of the no-longer” since the gods have fled, and “of the not-yet” since the God in its fullness is yet to come.

Expanding upon Löwith’s claim that a religious motive is palpable in Heidegger’s insistence that philosophy only lives up to its purpose when it maintains a timely wonderstruck attuned correspondence with Being is the recognition that “correspondence” (Entsprechen) in other places of the later Heidegger is used to explain the exchange between humanity and the holy. In developing the meaning of Being and the question of God in the thought of Heidegger, Jeff Owen Prudhomme recently showed the nuanced importance that correspondence plays in a 1944 writing by Heidegger that still awaits an English translation, Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung (Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry). Correspondence is conceived here as human speaking corresponding to (Entsprechung) the greeting of the holy, “Das Fest ist das Ereignis des Grußes, in dem das Heilige grüßt und grüßend erscheint.” (“The festival is the event of the greeting in which the holy greets and in greeting shows itself [appears].”)

While a more complete analysis of Heidegger’s concept of the holy and its relationship to the question of God and the meaning of Being will be undertaken in chapter four, it is valuable at this point to at least begin to see that Heidegger’s own grasp of the aim of philosophy may have theological overtones. The operative word here is
“may,” since there is a real danger for the theologically disposed and religious minded to make hasty conclusions after hearing the way in which Heidegger discusses Being in seemingly religious tones. For instance, it was just noted how “correspondence” serves the dual conceptual capacity of stressing the attentive listening required for thinkers as they attune to the appeal of Being or the greeting of the holy. A tempting yet erroneous move would be to conjecture that in Heidegger’s thinking Being equals God. While Heidegger himself emphatically denies such a facile equation and a theologically sympathetic commentator like John Macquarrie has called such an equation a “false move,” the urge to draw direct lines of connection between theology’s God and Heidegger’s Being will persist; and so the practice of extreme care and honesty will continually guide this work as it strives to explore how the God question in theology is impacted upon by Heidegger’s passion to ever cultivate the Being question in philosophy.

Now it is best to return to Heidegger’s self-presentation of where he fits into the Western philosophical tradition. To that end, this chapter has so far presented two definitions of philosophy from the later Heidegger. The initial definition with its quasi-mission statement ambition and breadth sees philosophy as a trail blazing thinking that may set the tone for an entire era. More circumscribed, though more telling for proceeding to unpack the various aspects of Heidegger’s project, is the second definition that philosophy is a vigilant listening for the appeal of Being in order to establish and maintain an attuned correspondence between itself and humanity.

Philosophy’s efforts to adequately maintain and nurture this communicative dynamic between itself and Being is no mere arcane exercise but a real duty of weighty consequence, since humanity, viz. the thinker, is charged to act in the capacity of
stewardship toward Being. Heidegger is well known for his insistence that, “…man [sic] is the shepherd of Being (der Hirt des Seins)…,”\textsuperscript{30} and what is important to comprehend here is the onus that is placed on philosophy. If philosophy fosters a thinking which attunes humanity to hear the appeal of Being, then it will have made progress in installing competent stewards to nurture the truth of Being. However, if philosophy misses its cue and opts to embrace a thinking that is less than attentive to Being’s call, then it will be hampered in its abilities to advance the shepherding of Being’s truth and meaning, “…the sole kind of thinking is one that attunes [humanity] to hear the voice of Being. It is a thinking that enables [humanity] to bend to the task of guardianship over the truth of Being.”\textsuperscript{31}

The Forgetfulness of Being

A natural question that arises in this context is one that puts philosophy on the spot. In other words, has Western philosophy been successful throughout its long history in cultivating a thinking that is well attuned to Being’s appeal? No one-word answer could serve as a just response to this question, however, Heidegger does offer a conceptual explanation as a response known as the “forgetfulness of Being” (Seinsvergessenheit). This is a most intriguing feature of Heidegger’s thought and for some observers a shining point of his originality.\textsuperscript{32}

As fascinating as the expression the “forgetfulness of Being” may be, it is not the intent here to pursue it so as merely to slake intellectual curiosity. Instead, it is hoped that a proper grasp of its meaning will help to better locate Heidegger in the Western
philosophical tradition as well as expose his own unique evaluation of this long-standing intellectual enterprise.

The evaluation proceeds at first in a negative vein, and this is of no surprise due to the less than positive connotations which normally surround an activity like “forgetting.” Heidegger wastes no time in issuing a stinging indictment to Western philosophy and its alter ego metaphysics for their dereliction of duty, “…the truth of Being has remained concealed from metaphysics during its long history from Anaximander to Nietzsche.”

The reason why philosophy stands guilty as charged centers on the misplacement of its energies and focus. Instead of tenaciously attempting to probe questions concerning the truth of “Being,” philosophy has channeled its efforts to the study of “beings.” Even though the historical record of metaphysics indicates a thoroughgoing agenda to entertain questions about the meaning of Being, in reality it has all been a sham. Human beings have been trapped in an “utter servitude” by metaphysics that has allowed them to become “duped too long by beings” and so “alienated by Being.”

Despite the perennial acknowledgment and general agreement that the primary and proper task of philosophy, viz. “ontology,” was to find an answer to the question, “What is being?” (ti to on), there actually has been only a surfacy handling of this question:

Metaphysics gives, and seems to confirm, the appearance that it asks and answers the question concerning Being. In fact, metaphysics never answers the question concerning the truth of Being, for it never asks this question. Metaphysics does not ask this question because it thinks Being only by representing beings as beings [beings as a whole]. It means all beings as a whole, although it speaks of Being.

Therefore, there has been a diversion of philosophy’s attention away from Being proper to beings, and this Heidegger clarifies as a metaphysical forgetting rather than a
psychological forgetting. In other words, because of the human philosophical proclivity to analyze and further delineate the scope of beings, entities or “things,” there has been a slippage into a state of forgetfulness or oblivion about Being itself, “The majority of men [sic] sink into oblivion of Being (in der Seinsvergessenheit), although – or precisely because – they constantly have to do solely with the things that are in their vicinity.”36 In lieu of metaphysics allowing itself to be claimed by the call of Being in accordance with Heidegger’s own definition of philosophy, it has been preoccupied with beings which has led to only a dim sense of the full meaning of Being, “Whatever matters to us and makes a claim on us here and now, in this or that way, as this or that thing, is – to the extent that it is at all – only a homoioma, an approximation to Being.”37

The preceding makes clear how Heidegger bursts forth upon the scene of Western philosophy with a unique flair. He assumes his position in a well-established institution by boldly claiming that philosophy has missed its mark. Rather than listening attentively for the call of Being itself, the metaphysical machinations that have dominated philosophy for the past 2,500 years have concentrated mainly on the study of beings. To avoid reaching the hasty conclusion that Heidegger is merely a nay-saying upstart as he debuts on the stage of Western philosophy, it must be borne in mind that “confusion” and “perplexity” have been the chief sources of distraction for philosophers of the West, not just sheer incompetence or worse yet malice.

Therefore, when Heidegger explicitly defines the concept “forgetfulness of Being,” a hint of clemency is detectable, “The forgetfulness of Being is the forgetfulness of the distinction between Being and beings.”38 Western thinkers have misdirected their efforts towards beings and away from Being per se, not as a result of some clumsy
glaring oversight, but because they missed a fine nuance – the dynamic between the
distinction of beings and Being.

While no simple formula would truly capture the full essence of this complicated
distinction, it does facilitate Heidegger’s attitude of reduced culpability toward
philosophy to appreciate that beings are best associated with “what is present” and Being
can be understood as an event of “presencing” (das Ereignis). Understandably, the main
stream of philosophers have opted to wholeheartedly embrace presence (physis) as the
primary mode of access to Being, most overtly in the fixation on beings, the tangible
“what is present” in the here and now. But they have also done so more subtly in the
manner that the “presencing” behind the “what is present” has found expression. For
even here there was a tendency toward reification as the beingness of beings (ousia) was
attributed either to something most universal or a highest trait. Heidegger dubs this two-
fold strategy of metaphysics with the neologism “onto-theo-logy.”

If this expression is explained by pausing after each of the hyphens inserted by
Heidegger, it is less intimidating and even enlightening. Metaphysics is first “onto-logic”
because in its treatment of the beingness of beings (the presencing of what is present) it
wants to establish what are the most universal traits. To borrow a concept from the
discipline of mathematics, metaphysics tries to present the “lowest common
denominator” or more crudely the generic “stuff” which characterizes and is possessed by
all beings. At the same time, metaphysics is secondly “theo-logic” in that by seeking to
decipher what beings are in their totality a hierarchy arises where one being looms over
the other beings as the highest or divine.
Thus, metaphysics’ “onto-theo-logical” methodology contributed to further the confusion surrounding the distinction between “what is present” (beings) and “presencing” (Being) by providing a quick means of egress to that which is most comfortable: the real, the manifest, the tangible, the manipulable. While these characteristics are readily applicable to the “what is present” or the being side of the distinction, it is also possible to apply them to the more elusive “presencing” or Being half when a universal or highest trait is thought to be the ultimate foundation enabling any such presencing – onto-theo-logy. Important to keep in mind is that the fallout from this blurred distinction between beings and Being emboldened the “forgetfulness of Being” so rife in Western philosophy.

It is under the rubric of the “ontological difference” in many places of the later Heideggerian corpus that attention is directed to philosophy’s further complicity in the confusion surrounding the distinction between beings and Being. By not acknowledging the distinction’s hidden foundational import philosophy missed its possible rich contributions to the furtherance of the meaning of Being. The following excerpt from the fourth volume of the *Nietzsche* lectures shows the importance that this oft ignored distinction has for metaphysics and its sophisticated depth, since full articulation of the being/Being gradation and modulation requires several words for its expression, i.e., *Unterscheidung, Differenz, Austrag*:

The “distinction” (*Unterscheidung*) is more appropriately identified by the *difference* (*Differenz*), in which it is intimated that beings and Being are somehow set apart from each other, separated, and nonetheless connected to each other…Distinction as “difference” means that a *settlement* (*Austrag*) between Being and beings exists…The reference to the ontological difference identifies the ground and the “foundation” of all onto-logy and thus of all metaphysics. ⁴¹
The note of irony that Heidegger sounds regarding the importance of the dynamic interplay that ensues in the distinction between beings and Being is that philosophers, in fact all people, are immersed in this distinction yet totally benighted about its enabling power for fully encountering both beings and Being, “we stand in the distinction between beings and Being. Such distinction sustains the relationship to Being and supports relations with beings.”\footnote{42} However, it is Heidegger’s hope that if philosophy widens its peripheral vision and so more regularly takes notice of the distinction between beings and Being that is “already there,” then the result could be an alleviation of the chronic forgetfulness of Being condition, “Thus we think of Being rigorously when we think of it in its difference with beings, and of beings in their difference with Being.”\footnote{43} It will be seen later in the section entitled “Overcoming Metaphysics: Heidegger’s Step Back” how a meditative immersion in the difference between beings and Being is integral in the project to overcome metaphysics.

A significant phrase worthy of more careful regard in the preceding paragraph is “\textit{could} be an alleviation of the chronic forgetfulness of Being condition.” The purposeful choice of the passive voice and rather suggestive terms such as “alleviate” and “chronic” signal something of consequence about Heidegger’s charge of forgetfulness of Being. There has already been a hint through the discussion of the mitigating circumstances which surround philosophy’s oversight of the distinction between “presencing” (Being) and “what is present” (beings); however, it will now become even more apparent that a realization of the true source of the forgetfulness of Being lies far beyond the control of any philosophical, metaphysical, or ontological system and their adherents.
Initially, the discussion of the forgetfulness of Being was described in a somewhat negative vein due to the undertones that an act of “forgetting” typically evokes. Armed with such negative implications, Heidegger was able to turn his interpretation of Western philosophy into an accusation that leveled the brunt of this state of amnesia upon the shoulders of philosophy’s metaphysical method, which contributed confusion and thus aided and abetted the forgetfulness of Being – even though extenuating circumstances could be cited to ameliorate any full responsibility.

However, Heidegger’s forgetfulness of Being in the course of Western philosophy also possesses a more positive dimension. No longer are charged expressions like “forgetfulness” and “forgetting” declared in order to begin an immediate search for some culprit responsible for this negligence. Rather, a more positive direction is given by the exoneration that Heidegger now bestows on metaphysics and its practitioners:

\[
\text{oblivion of the distinction [between beings and Being] is by no means the consequence of a forgetfulness of thinking. The forgetfulness of Being belongs to the self-veiling essence of Being. It belongs so essentially to the destiny of Being that the dawn of this destiny rises as the unveiling of what is present in its presencing. This means that the history of Being begins with the forgetfulness of Being, since Being – together with its essence, its distinction from beings – keeps to itself.}^{44}
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Therefore, the ultimate source for the forgetfulness of Being that has blighted philosophy from its earliest stages is Being itself rather than ineptitude on the part of philosophers! This is not to say that the thinkers in the Western metaphysical tradition had no complicity in exacerbating the condition of the forgetfulness of Being, since indeed they chose certain paths and developed particular systems at the behest of Being’s elusivity that compromised any true attuned correspondence with Being for at least 2,500 years.
“Being Loves to Hide Itself”  
– Heraclitus

Because there is some revelation about Being that arises from identifying Being itself as ultimately responsible for the perduring state of forgetfulnessness, a more positive aspect of this condition for Western philosophy can be gleaned. A dimension of Being is discovered that was (and still is) mostly neglected: Being conceals itself, holds itself back, refuses itself, stays away, defaults. Since the time of Plato and Aristotle, the reigning concept of choice used to elaborate Being was presence (physis) which could be found in every articulation of Being. This was clearly evident above when the forgetfulness of Being was defined as a confusion between the distinction between beings and Being, between what is present and presencing.

It is helpful at this point to be cognizant of Heidegger’s special affinity for the pre-Socratic or early Greek philosophers, i.e., Parmenides, Heraclitus, and Anaximander. One of the recurring themes throughout the later Heidegger is a special bias accorded to early Greek thinking. According to Heidegger, these thinkers had a relationship with Being that was qualitatively different than their many successors. Unlike Plato and every subsequent professional Western philosopher, the pre-Socrates maintained a reverential relationship with Being. They would have been laudable adherents to Heidegger’s definition of philosophy discussed previously, since they would have been more passive in their respectful listening for the call of Being.

It is specifically to Heraclitus that Heidegger turns in order to demonstrate that an attuned correspondence with Being can reveal something awesome about its meaning and truth. In at least two places of his later writings, Heidegger pays tribute to Heraclitus’ receptive attentiveness to Being’s appeal which afforded him a privileged insight about
Being’s self-concealment, refusal, defaulting, staying away, “Already before Plato and Aristotle, Heraclitus – one of the early Greek thinkers – had said: *physis kruptesthai pilei*: Being loves (a) self-concealing (*Sein liebt (ein) Sichverbergen*).”45

But if Heraclitus were closer to something revelatory about Being due to Being’s own bidding, it was quickly lost or ignored with the establishment of metaphysics proper. Again, this is not ultimately the result of some defective thinking but Being’s own refusal to approach and so point the metaphysician’s thought in a specific direction:

> metaphysics asserts and knows itself as a thinking that always and everywhere thinks “Being,” although only in the sense of the being as such. Of course, metaphysics does not recognize this “although only.” And it does not recognize it, not because it repudiates Being itself as to-be-thought, *but because Being itself stays away (sondern weil das Sein selbst ausbleibt)*. But if that is so, then the “unthought” does not stem from a thinking that neglects something.46

The full breadth of Being remains unthought in philosophy because of the constitutive nature of Being itself to stay away, to default, and so it fails to gain a full articulation in the history of metaphysics.

Heidegger is certainly aware that any suggestion about Being deliberately concealing itself will be quite unsettling and disconcerting yet far reaching for philosophy. He employs such forceful expressions like “dread” (*die Angst*) and even “horror” (*das Schrecken*) to describe the philosopher’s distress that may prove debilitating for future attempts at thinking:

> Would there still be occasion for a thoughtful person to give himself [sic] arrogant airs in view of this fateful withdrawal with which Being presents us?...If the oblivion of Being which has been described here should be real, would there not be occasion enough for a thinker who recalls Being to experience a genuine horror? (in den Schrecken) What more can his thinking do than to endure in dread (in der Angst) this fateful withdrawal while first of all facing up to the oblivion of Being?47
This statement is at once sobering in the context of the current discussion and synthetic for what has immediately preceded. Not only does it convey the panic that can be created by Heidegger’s assertion concerning Being’s self-withdrawal, but it also establishes the important link between Being’s “forgetfulness” or “oblivion” and its self-concealment, thus accentuating the true source of the amnesia that has vexed Western metaphysics from its very beginnings with Plato and Aristotle.

While the expression “dread” (die Angst) carries considerable connotative freight in the parlance of existential-phenomenological philosophy and psychology, and more specifically is notably embraced by Heidegger in both his early and late periods, it would move far beyond the boundaries of this chapter to attempt the full explication that this concept deserves. Thus, a fuller treatment will take place in chapter four. In the meantime it will be pertinent to muse over why such states of dread and horror are induced by the revelation that Being “loves to hide itself.”

The basis for such trauma is that which is associated with most drastic paradigm shifts. In this particular instance, there has already been an indication about the extent to which “presence” has enjoyed an unrivaled place of honor as philosophy’s chief conceptual means to understand and explain Being. John D. Caputo chronicles the hegemony of “presence” in Western metaphysics that even ensnares Heidegger’s beloved pre-Socratics, who predate metaphysics proper, “Every attempt to think Being from Anaximander to Husserl has understood Being in terms of ‘presence’ (Anwesen).” In line with Heidegger, Caputo extends leniency to the pre-Socratics, since the true conceptual entrenchment of presence favoring the real, the material, the actual, the manifest, etc. came with Plato and Aristotle:
The gift of *Anwesen* [presence] which was bestowed upon the early Greek thinkers was of *primal* and *pristine* quality…After the early Greek thinkers, the primal sense of *Anwesen* [presence] congealed into “permanent presentness” in Plato and Aristotle. Instead of experiencing its [Being’s] rising up, lingering, and *sinking away*, Western metaphysicians identified Being as that which clings steadfastly to actuality.49

Heidegger obviously adumbrates Caputo’s remarks in a way that is a bit more telling insofar as he addresses the ultimate consequences of a thinking that established a toehold many centuries ago. In other words, Being as presence/presencing began with the Greeks and had a binding force on Western thinking to the point of reaching a zenith in the current technological age,

Now that modern technology has arranged its expansion and rule over the whole earth, it is not just the sputniks and their by-products that are circling around our planet; it is rather Being as presencing (*Anwesen*) in the sense of calculable material (*des berechenbaren Bestandes*) that claims all the inhabitants of the earth in a uniform manner…50

As indicated by Caputo, such a precarious zenith need not have been reached had the more primal and pristine qualities of presence or *Anwesen* expounded by the pre-Socratics been better heeded. Heidegger used the German word *Anwesen* to translate the early Greek word *physis* in several of his later interpretations, particularly in fragments of the pre-Socratic philosophers.51 The rendering of *physis* into *Anwesen* in these instances was meant to capture the active and creative aspect of presence/presencing. For this reason, to appreciate the strength of the word *physis* in an unadulterated way is to realize that:

It denotes self-blossoming emergence (e.g. the blossoming of a rose), opening up, unfolding, that which manifests itself in such unfolding and preserves and endures in it; in short, the realm of things that emerge and linger on…*Physis* means the power that emerges and the enduring realm under its sway.52

For the early Greeks, then, the word *physis* as “presencing/presenting” to describe the meaning of Being was full of rich connotations. However, *physis* soon lost its ability to
convey the more dynamic aspects of presence as a presenting rising and upsurging when it became more readily known by its Latin rendering of “nature” (*natura*). With the popularization of this Latin translation in Medieval philosophy, the original meaning of the Greek word *physis* is “thrust aside,” according to Heidegger, and the actual philosophical force of the Greek word is “destroyed:”

But if as is usually done, *physis* is taken not in the original sense of power to emerge and endure, but in the later and present signification of nature; and if moreover the motion of material things (*stofflichen Dinge*), of the atoms and electrons, of what modern physics investigates as *physis*, is taken to be the fundamental manifestation of nature, then the first philosophy of the Greeks becomes a nature philosophy, in which all things are held to be of a material nature (*zu einer Vorstellung aller Dinge, gemäß der sie eigentlich stofflicher Natur sind*).53

It should be clearer now why twinges of dread and horror initially overcome the thinker listening to Heidegger’s promptings that Being loves to hide, withdraw, self-conceal. Under the dominance of a rather stilted notion of *physis* as the reigning conceptual means to comprehend Being, the penchant arose and took hold for “what is present” – beings, entities, materiality, the real, “stuff.” As a result, any inkling that access to the truth and meaning of Being should also be acquired through recourse to its more elusive tendencies which obviously disclose “nothing” real and tangible would certainly be a daunting paradigm shift in the customary manner of thinking about Being. It is not just a matter of surmounting an impaired notion of *physis* that has so infected the comprehension of Being as “permanentized presence,” but it is also fighting ancillary concepts which reign havoc upon the philosopher’s comfort zone. Not only was *physis*’ active dynamism bastardized in the course of metaphysics, but so too was Aristotle’s *energia* by its successor *actualitis* (*actuality*), “Ever since the transformation of *energia*
to actualitis (reality, *Wirklichkeit*), the real (*das Wirkliche*) is truly what is in being[s] (*Seiende*) and thus decisive for everything possible and necessary.”

A brief yet important aside is necessary before proceeding. The mention that Aristotle’s forceful conceptualizations about the Being of beings were also diminished as the history of Western philosophy ensued demonstrates the gradual nature of the forgetfulness/oblivion of Being over time. Richard Rojcewicz, who has translated numerous later Heideggerian works into English and published widely in the field of phenomenological philosophy committed to the Husserlian tradition, makes an astute observation in *The Gods and Technology: A Reading of Heidegger*. With the encomia that Heidegger lavishes upon the pre-Socratics for their attuned attentiveness to Being’s appeal during a special era of Being’s full approach, followed by his disparagement for the inabilitys of succeeding generations of philosophers to follow a suit, a caricature could develop that there was a clear line of demarcation: the pre-Socratic philosophy and all the rest of philosophy beginning in earnest with Plato and Aristotle. However, the fact that Being “loves a self-concealing” is an event that gradually unfolds in the expressions of Western philosophy. Being more and more hides itself or withdraws and philosophy in turn unknowingly accommodates this through articulations about Being that are deficient.

An example of this gradualism in philosophy’s inability to clearly parse out the meaning of Being that continues to elude any true clarification is seen in the above mention of Aristotle. Still basking in the immediacy of the pre-Socratic heyday to make the most of Being’s clarion call, Aristotle found his penetrating notion of *energia* for Being’s truth later denigrated in the period of the “Romans” or Medieval philosophy. It
is interesting that Heidegger casts his net widely enough to include theology as corroborative in sullying the pristine force that Aristotle’s *energia* once conveyed about the meaning of Being:

> a transition from the Greek to the Roman conceptual language has come about. But in order to realize sufficiently even merely historically the scope of this transition, the Roman character must be understood in the full wealth of its historical developments, so that it includes the politically imperial element of Rome, the Christian element of the Roman church, and the Romantic element as well.\(^{56}\)

The full implications that the bias for the “real” in explaining Being from a theological perspective will have to wait until the relationship of Being and God is more fully explicated in later portions of this dissertation.

It is now fitting to resume discussing the dread and horror brought upon with Heidegger’s bold reassertion that Being “withdraws.” The state of anxiety that philosophy is thrown into is understandable in light of the degenerations that key conceptual terms underwent in the course of Western metaphysics. *Physis* was relegated to describing only the present/presence aspect of Being (*Anwesen*), while *energia* was consigned to detailing the Being of beings as that which is actual or real (*die Wirklichkeit*).

However, the dread that consumes the philosopher as she is challenged to think Being in new directions that veer away from the tried and true concepts of what is present, real, and material need not be incapacitating. Rather for Heidegger, the initial dread that naturally accompanies most challenges to established ways and patterns of thought can actually become a revelatory mood of unprecedented disclosure. It is well known that in Division One of *Being and Time*, there is a rather broad treatment of anxiety as one of Dasein’s basic states of mind (*die Grundbefindlichkeit*) which proves to be a distinctive means of disclosure for the being of human existence.\(^{57}\) But on the
occasion of Heidegger’s inauguration as Rector of the University of Freiburg in 1929 he delivers an essay entitled “What Is Metaphysics?,” which presents a very focused handling of anxiety’s disclosive potential. The fact that this lecture was not intended to be a clear statement of doctrine but more of a controversial challenge to philosophy is evidenced by Heidegger’s felt need for clarity’s sake to add a Postscript in 1943, “Nachwort zu ‘Was Ist Metaphysik?,’” and a subsequent Introduction in 1949, “Einleitung zu ‘Was Is Metaphysik?’.”

Dread or anxiety can be revelatory not only about and for the human being in the world, an interest more in keeping with the aim of the early Heidegger per se in Being and Time, but also about Being itself! The only hurdle is whether or not the human person, namely the philosopher or thinker, will be willing to forgo the comfortable surroundings that well established and accepted conceptual analyses of Being provide in order to dwell in the dread that is symptomatic of the entertainment of novel expressions about the meaning and truth of Being – “Being loves to hide itself.” (“Das Sein liebt es, sich zu verbergen.”) Heidegger counsels that a willingness to approach and embrace rather than avoid and shun the anxiety brought about by a radical insight about Being will turn out to be beneficial in deepening and enhancing the truth of Being, “The clear courage for essential dread guarantees that most mysterious of all possibilities: the experience of Being.”

Commenting on Heidegger’s work from a theological perspective, Robert P. Orr explains the significance of “What Is Metaphysics?” in the evolving later Heideggerian corpus for fine-tuning anxiety as a promising mode of awareness that complements observations so far advanced regarding the necessity to surmount the stifling concepts of
presence and reality so as to better grasp the meaning of Being: “‘What Is Metaphysics?’ seeks to uncover a mode of awareness that is inherently non-scientific, one that is aware beyond the particularities of what-is.”

Orr proceeds to make an important point about the original German Heidegger uses to express this distinctive “mode of awareness.” The German term employed is die Stimmung, whose ordinary sense is equivalent to the English “mood.” However, the word Stimmung does not mean “feeling” in the ordinary sense of some interior or subjective sensation. Instead, according to Heidegger, die Stimmung names an affective state of being attuned to something, being in tune with a voice in which something declares itself.

Of course this nebulous vociferous “something,” to use Orr’s expression, is none other than the appeal of Being! This manner of speaking is most reminiscent of an earlier discussion in this chapter concerning the more circumscribed Heideggerian definition of philosophy as an attuned correspondence to the appeal of Being. This definition was extracted from the later piece entitled What Is Philosophy?, and a close reexamination in light of the present discussion about the special “attuning” power of anxiety vis-à-vis Being lends a greater specificity to Heidegger’s seemingly broad charge that philosophy should tune into Being’s call. The same German word die Stimmung and its verbal and adjectival cognates are used in both What Is Philosophy? and “What Is Metaphysics?” – “bestimmt,” “gestimmtes,” “Ge-stimmtheit,” “Be-stimmtheit.” But it is in the latter work that the attunement to Being is facilitated by the mood of anxiety. Thus, the later ambitious promptings of Heidegger for philosophers to maintain an attuned correspondence with the appeal of Being is given some helpful direction by recourse to an earlier text. Though few will gleefully embrace the state of anxiety, for Heidegger it is
the privileged means offered by Being to hone the attunement of its call to the receptive thinker.

So, what experience of Being may be had if there is a willingness to accept the anxiety attendant upon the initial realization that Being loves to hide itself, to withdraw, to stay away? As Heidegger has already presaged, the courage to take up the dread will assure a mysterious possibility for the experience of Being. In other words, anxiety provoked by an introduction to Being’s desire to conceal itself is not alleviated, but rather staying the course with this dread leads to an even greater profundity in regards to the meaning and truth of Being:

An experience of Being as sometimes “other” than everything that “is” comes to us in dread (die Angst), provided that we do not, from dread of dread, i.e. in sheer timidity, shut our ears to the soundless voice which attunes us to the horrors of the abyss (des Abgrundes).61

**Being and the Embarrassment of the Nothing**

The awareness that Heidegger terms die Angst is an awe-inspiring awareness that transcends the typical forms of perceptual and intuitive disclosedness. Harnessing upon the stirrings of dread will not lead to a regressive experience of Being encapsulated in concepts related to presencing (Anwesen) or the reality of particular things (Wirklichkeit). Rather, as noted by Orr, the awareness is one that goes beyond the disclosedness of all that is to a realm of the primordial other of the totality of what is. The one term that can name such a realm is “nothing,” “das Nichts.”62 The full force of anxiety as a moodful attunement to an experience of Being is that it reaches out into the nothing. Heidegger is most direct and emphatic on this score as he concludes, “Anxiety reveals the nothing.” (“Die Angst offenbart das Nichts.”)63
When Heidegger assumes his new position of Rector at the University of Freiburg, he is not seeking to directly answer the question that entitles his address with the usual pabulum familiar to the Western philosophical world. Instead, the radically new and main theme of “What Is Metaphysics?” is the development of the problem of Being as one with and in terms of the problem of nothing or non-Being (*das Nichts*). Intriguing at a different yet related level than the meaning of Being is the way in which Heidegger turns to the nothing as a key conceptual means in the project to “overcome” metaphysics. This additional unique challenge that Heidegger contributes to Western philosophy will serve as an appropriate discussion later to bring this chapter to a close.

Observable now is a progression in the levels of intensity as the question of the meaning of Being is broached. At the outset and at the lowest tier, Heidegger lauded the pre-Socratics, viz. Heraclitus, for their receptivity that allows for their sagacious observation that Being loves to hide itself. This is indeed provocative in light of the fact that the subsequent typical philosophical means to articulate the truth of Being were one-sidedly expressive along the lines of presence or the real. The level of intensity soars to a fever pitch, however, when Heidegger invites philosophy to stay with and dwell in the anxiety caused by the realization that Being loves a self-concealing in order to discover that Being is intimately related to non-Being or nothing. Coming to terms with the fall out that this portends for the meaning of Being is indeed disconcerting because of the plain fact that the thinker is being asked to directly confront the full weight of nothingness, “the horrors of the abyss.” However at the same time, there is in the depth of this mystery the possibility of having an unprecedented experience of and appreciation for Being.
Steering away from the more frightening aspects surrounding the engagement with the nothing, yet nonetheless expressing feelings of unease amidst philosophical circles is Gadamer in his masterful work on hermeneutics, *Truth and Method*. When Heidegger invites philosophy to juxtapose Being and non-Being to further the disclosure of the meaning and truth of Being, it is a source of “embarrassment” in Gadamer’s mind,

Heidegger revealed the essential forgetfulness of Being that had dominated Western thought since Greek metaphysics because of the embarrassing problem of nothingness. By showing that the question of Being included the question of nothingness, he joined the beginning to the end of metaphysics. That the question of Being could represent itself as the question of nothingness postulated a thinking of nothingness impossible for metaphysics.65

Here, Gadamer is found adroitly synthesizing several ponderous topics, some of which have already been discussed earlier, i.e. the “forgetfulness of Being,” and others like the “end of metaphysics,” which is set to receive a fuller analysis in the closing section of this chapter. The nub of his insight at this point, however, is to comprehend the magnitude of Heidegger’s insistence for philosophy to take full cognizance of the nothing, non-Being, *das Nichts* in its discernments over the meaning of Being.

Be it the awkwardness of “embarrassment” (*pace* Gadamer) or the fright from terror, these feelings though necessary when integrating non-Being and Being need not prove debilitating. A thorough examination of the passages in Heidegger’s “Postscript to ‘What Is Metaphysics?’” shows the potential that these feelings can bestow when their proximity to other crucial disclosive feelings is realized. For instance, the importance of wonder (*Erstaunen*) was presented earlier as an essential component for the philosopher’s attitude of receptivity in welcoming an attuned correspondence with the voice of Being. To wonder can now be added the complementary feeling of “awe” when in the throes of a profound experiential encounter with Being and the nothing. A credible endorsement for
the coupling of awe and wonder could be elicited from Rudolf Otto (d. 1937), Heidegger’s senior colleague during his time at the University of Marburg (1923-1929). Otto’s well known expression *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* to describe the vicissitudes of an experiential encounter with the holy (the “numinous”) is analogous to the awe and wonder that surrounds and sustains a meaningful encounter with Being and its more daunting dimension of the nothing.\(^6\)

A more recent English translation of Heidegger’s “Postscript to ‘What Is Metaphysics?’” than Walter Kaufmann’s used thus far is particularly helpful in showing the promise hovering about anxiety when appreciated for its relationship to awe, “The lucid courage for essential anxiety assures us the enigmatic possibility of experiencing Being. For close by essential anxiety as the horror of the abyss dwells awe.” (“Denn nahe bei der wesenhaften Angst als dem Schrecken des Abgrundes wohnt die Scheu.”)\(^6\)

This translation by William McNeill more clearly conveys Heidegger’s inviting Western philosophy to assume a wonderfilled, awestruck posture in the face of nothing. This is actually not that surprising when it is recalled how pervasive the following question is throughout the later Heideggerian corpus: “Why are there beings at all, and not rather nothing?” Acting as an Ariadne’s thread for finding one’s way through the later texts, Macquarrie has gone so far as to call this question emblematic for the later Heidegger.\(^6\)

Macquarrie is led to such a strong statement because of the sheer prevalence and strategic placement of this question in the later writings. Of special relevance for recognizing its “emblematic” quality is the fact that Heidegger uses this question with full rhetorical force to close the address that currently has been undergoing a careful study, “What Is
Metaphysics?,” as well as to begin the 1935 essay cited earlier, An Introduction to Metaphysics.

Heidegger respectfully acknowledges that the question “Why are there beings at all and not rather nothing?” is not original to him, since esteemed philosophical predecessors like Friedrich Schelling and Gottfried W. Leibniz have also used this question as a means to better understand “…the highest reason and the first existing cause for all being(s).”69 However, Heidegger co-opts the famous question with a novel rigor detectable by the emotive aura of awe and wonder that should accompany the very asking of the question:

“Why are there beings at all, and why not far rather nothing?” Many men [sic] never encounter this question, if by encounter we mean not merely to hear and read about it as an interrogative formulation but to ask the question, that is to bring it about, to raise it, to feel its inevitability. And yet each of us is grazed at least once, perhaps more than once, by the hidden power of this question, even if he is not aware of what is happening to him.70

Heidegger then goes on in the remaining opening pages of An Introduction to Metaphysics to point out that the question arises in a variety of existentially charged situations, from moments of “despair” when life is falling apart, to moments of “rejoicing” when life seems transfigured, and even to moments of “boredom” when everything in life has lost significance.

Aside from the way in which this question hauntingly “grazes” human beings at watershed times of their lives, there is another important aspect of Heidegger’s use of this question that distinguishes his from other uses. The evocative power that it possesses stems from the reality that it forces a direct confrontation with the Being question on the playing field of nothingness – “Why are there beings at all, and why not far rather nothing?” Integrating the question of the nothing with the question of Being is not a
mere intellectual nicety for Heidegger, rather it is an imposing force to be contended with for any true advancement in the truth and meaning of Being. This is made clear as Heidegger draws to a close the Rectorial address, which has been very helpful in the development of the current discussion, “it swings back into the fundamental question of metaphysics that the nothing itself compels (die das Nichts selbst erzwingt): Why are there beings at all, and why not far rather nothing?”\(^7^1\) It will be developed in the next section how Heidegger’s challenge to approach this question in a “transformed” way can militate against fostering nihilism in its usual “inauthentic” understanding.

The originality of Heidegger’s use of this question not only distinguishes him from prior uses by fellow philosophers, viz. Schelling and Leibniz, but moreover it shows his intriguing affinity with and fascination for the Christian mystical tradition. In The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought, John Caputo analyzes Heidegger’s relationship to the Rhineland mystic and Dominican preacher Meister Johannes Eckhart of Hochheim (d. 1327). The thematic challenge to factor in the nothing, the non-Being when posing the question of the meaning of Being moves Heidegger out of the neighborhood of philosophy and into the proximity of mysticism, as Caputo observes:

> For like the mystic and unlike the philosopher, Heidegger calls for a non-representational experience of Being, and not, as in Being and Time, for a new conceptual determination of it. Like the mystic, Heidegger thinks his way through not to a first cause or ground – for Aristotle, philosophy is a search for grounds (aitiai) – but to an “abyss” (Abgrund) or “nothingness.” Like the mystic Eckhart, Heidegger’s “way” to Being is not the way of “discursive” reason, but the way of meditative stillness and total openness to that which is wholly other than beings, to the “simply transcendent.”\(^7^2\)

Of course Eckhart as a Dominican friar would have no grave reservations in permitting his penetrating correlations of Being and the abyss or nothingness to find theological applications in the discussion of God. Heidegger, on the other hand, as stated
previously emphatically disallows any immediate and direct connection between the Being question and concerns over the God issue. Nonetheless what Caputo has done, and what it is hoped that this study will also do in its own way, is to show that despite Heidegger’s nullification of any simple equation between God and Being there is still ample room for Heidegger to enrich the theology of God with his philosophy of Being. And the very emergence of “nothingness” in Heidegger’s wrestling with the meaning of Being is a case in point.

In an overt way, striving to bring about clarity in confronting the truly divine God (der göttliche Gott), Eckhart is genuinely a “great master of disruption,” according to Caputo in a later volume entitled Radical Hermeneutics, because he went against the grain of everyday theological concepts by saying that God is a “pure nothing.” This is certainly a startling claim, especially in light of the fact that Eckhart would be seen as not carrying the conceptual torch with much loyalty when it was his turn to occupy the same Dominican chair at Paris that Thomas Aquinas had held some twenty-five years earlier. Aquinas was indeed a staunch proponent of wedding the concepts of Being and God, and therefore did much to embolden and advance Being itself and all its regnant qualities as acceptable means towards understanding God. For instance, Caputo points out in yet another work, Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay in Overcoming Metaphysics, that in the Summa Theologiae I, q. 3, a. 4 it becomes clear for Aquinas that, “the highest and most proper designation for God is expressed in terms of esse (Being) rather than ens (a being)…It says more about God to say esse than to say ens.”

In a similar vein, Heidegger can be called a “great master of disruption” as he thinks through and thinks against the grain of everyday philosophical conceptions by his
challenge that Being must come to terms with nothing or non-Being – “Why are there beings at all, and why not far rather nothing?” And as Eckhart would be resisting a long theological tradition that propounded God as Being with his assertion that God is a pure nothing without even the smallest trace of Being, so too would Heidegger be threatening the well entrenched system of Western philosophy and its understanding of Being in terms of presence (Anwesen) and the real (Wirklichkeit) with his promotion of nothing.

The irony being capitalized upon here by both mystic and philosopher alike is the belief that a willingness to approach the depths of the nothing in order to better understand the mystery of the Godhead or Being touches upon a very similar depth of nothingness in the recesses of the human person. Here is where Caputo’s analysis of comparison throughout several places in his writings is most helpful in showing an accord between Heidegger and Eckhart. One formulation that Eckhart develops to discuss the mystical union with God is called “the breakthrough to the Godhead” (der Durchbuch zur Gottheit).75 Contact with the profound mysteriousness of God, namely God’s nothingness, is occasioned because at a certain deep spot in the human soul, what Eckhart called the “ground of the soul,” there is a cognizance of its very own abysmal nothingness. In other words, an encounter with the truly divine God, der göttliche Gott, (interestingly enough an encounter that also captivates Heidegger as will be shown later in this study) is likened to a “breakthrough” to another, altogether more strange and forbidding region.

However, the soul just does not wantonly leap headlong into this point of contact without having had the proper preparation that would at least give way to a positive outcome; instead, the very desire and willingness of the spiritual sojourner to plunge into
the deep and strange waters of the ground of her own soul acts as an initiation of sorts to ease the eventual encounter with the mysterious nothingness of the Godhead. Caputo adds that such a “breakthrough” would mean a concomitant “breakdown” as all the comfortable and familiar conceptions about God are challenged to varying degrees:

There was a point, in short, of what Eckhart called “breakthrough” (Durchbauch), where one got to understand the utter intractability of God to what theologians, priests, and common sense said was “God.” At this point, he said, we have the sense of not being flooded with light but of having fallen into an abyss (Abgrund)…76

Thus in concert with the plaintive yearnings of Psalm 130, “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord, hear my voice!,” a mutually reciprocal relationship is forged between the mysterious abysmal nothingness of the soul and the profound nothingness of God.

While Heidegger was not a theologian in the formal sense nor a cleric as was Eckhart, he nevertheless discussed the “heart’s core” (der Herzensgrund) as that deep spot in the mind that puts a thinker in touch with her own deep mysteriousness, which in turn is the means that allows Being to be “kept in mind” replete with its mysterious nothingness. Caputo remarks, “Whether one is a Dominican friar or not, there is a fine point in the mind where one is brought up short, a moment of midnight reckoning where the ground gives way and one also has the distinct sense of falling into an abyss. It is found…in Heidegger quite pervasively in the Nichts…”77

Heidegger treats this “fine point in the mind,” the heart’s core, in his post-war lecture published in 1954 as What Is Called Thinking? Here, Heidegger meditates on the senses of thinking by dialoguing with Nietzsche and the pre-Socratics.78 Always eager to experiment with neologisms that stem from re-examining the etymological and philosophical richness of words that may have gone unnoticed, Heidegger maintains that the perfect way to express the word “thinking” is by the Old High German expression
“gidanc,” rendered “der Gedanc” in modern German and “thanc” in English. According to Heidegger, this “thanc” pertains to the thinker’s very depths, much akin to the deep spot Eckhart dubbed the “ground of the soul,” “The thanc means man’s [sic] inmost mind, the heart, the heart’s core, that innermost essence of man…(Der Gedanc bedeutet: das Gemüt, das Herz, den Herzensgrund, jenes Innerste des Menschen…).”

The immediate benefits of appreciating thinking in terms of “thanc” as a dynamic capacity at the very recesses of a person’s being is that it enables a near boundless transcendence out of the depths, “…that innermost essence of man which reaches outward most fully to the outermost limits…” Moreover, thinking from the heart’s core functions in a synthesizing fashion to balance the initial functioning of transcendence and its seeming “sense and taste for the infinite,” to borrow a phrase from Friedrich Schleiermacher (d. 1834), the father of Liberal Protestant theology. So for Heidegger, the “thanc,” the heart’s core is also, “…the gathering of all that concerns us, all that we care for, all that touches us insofar as we are, as human beings.”

Most important for the present purposes of this study, however, is to respect that the thinking which wells up from a thinker’s profound depths, the “heart’ core,” possesses a certain degree of piety. This is because Heidegger contends that the latter gathering/synthesizing function of thinking out of the depths is related to the more common understanding of thinking involving memory and recollection. But for Heidegger and his penchant to go back and rediscover overlooked meanings in words, memory not only means the capacity to retain and recall events from the past, it also conveys pious devotion:

In its original telling sense, memory (Gedächtnis) means as much as devotion (die Andacht). This word possesses the special tone of the pious and piety (des Frommen und der Frömmigkeit), and designates
the devotion of prayer (des Gebetes), only because it denotes the all-comprehensive relation of concentration upon the holy and the gracious (auf das Heile und Huldvolle).

A more recent scholarly endeavor in line with Caputo’s pioneering work in English on Heidegger and Eckhart is that undertaken by Sonya Sikka, who casts her glance even wider to include analyses of Heidegger and other mystics besides Eckhart. In her work *Forms of Transcendence: Heidegger and Medieval Mystical Theology*, Sikka is hard at work comparing and contrasting Heidegger with Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, and Jan van Ruysbroec. It is specifically in her treatment of Tauler’s notion of contemplative devotion that Sikka comments on the above-cited passages from Heidegger’s *What Is Called Thinking?* and believes that Heidegger is clearly establishing an important nuance in the relationship between thinking and Being. When the thinker is so submerged and deeply in touch with her inmost mind, (das Gemüt), her heart (das Herz), her heart’s core (der Herzensgrund), in short her innermost essence (jenes Innerste des Menschen), then thinking assumes a devotional tone characterized not by clear logical reasoning, but by memory (Gedächtnis), remembering and commemorating (Andenken), thanking (Danken) and devotion (Andacht). The focus of this concentrated commemorative remembrance is that which for Heidegger is “most worthy of thought” – Being. This meditative remembrance at one’s very core is a devotion to Being in all of its utter profundity, which includes its mysterious abysmal nothingness. Only by a willingness to travel deeply within himself to the point of a seeming scary abyss that teeters on an empty void of nothingness can the thinker then be piously disposed to comprehend in a partial sense Being and all its depths vacillating toward the nothing. Sikka contends that out of the depths of such devotional thinking is remembrance of Being, a giving thought to Being. However, she is quick to point out that this type of thinking is not some clinical
exercise of detached speculation about the abstract nature of Being. It is instead a pious meditative thinking that keeps Being in mind in order to deliver thought over to Being. Simply put, it is a dedication to Being.84

It should be no great surprise that such deep thinking which goes to the very mysterious depth dimensions of the human person would be integral in establishing a disclosive opportunity about Being at its own mysterious depths, since as was referred to previously Being is always to be credited for motivating human thinking. In the words of Heidegger, “We never come to thoughts. They come to us.” Therefore, if the mysterious nothing has been a long neglected deep aspect of Being by most practitioners of Western philosophy and now there is a call by Heidegger to value the nothing as revelatory for the meaning of Being, then it is really Being itself making the overture to the thinker at her inner most depths that may lead to a new discovery about the truth of Being. As it were, Being takes the initiative and issues that “call” to which philosophy is supposed to be attuned. It does this by stirring the attentive listening thinker at his innermost mysterious depths in a quiet and deserted place of “nothing” to fall back on or be distracted by in order to draw him to appreciating the ineffability of Being’s most profound yet neglected expression: the nothing.

Two questions may arise. First, can the typical Western thinker, conditioned as she may be, endure the specter of nothingness as it applies to Being and self? It is not just a matter of surmounting the noted initial anxiety and dread that naturally accompany any honest confrontational brush with nothing, but even more challenging is the ability to withstand a sustained relationship with or immersion into the nothing so as to be able to genuinely come to terms with what it may impart about the meaning and truth of Being
and self. Even if the thinker has the mettle to fully embrace the mysterious depths of nothingness, the second question is whether or not she wants to do so. In other words, to reverse the popular aphorism, she may be “more able than willing.” The main reason for not wanting to plunge into the deep fathoms of the nothing is that such a leap seems to be none other than an invitation to a comprehensive program of nihilism. But, is nihilism the only possible outcome when philosophy revisits the question of the meaning of Being via the route of the nothing?

**Authentic and Inauthentic Nihilism**

Heidegger was quite used to fending off such sweeping charges that his promptings to rethink the nothing in order to better examine the Being question was a programmatic cultivation of nihilism. In 1955 he wrote a lengthy letter to Ernst Jünger, a German essayist and novelist, entitled “Über ‘Die Linie.’” Published a year later as *Zur Seinsfrage* ([On] The Question of Being), this work offers one of Heidegger’s clearest explorations of the positive aspects of the relation of Being to nothing and to nihilism. At one place in this public letter, Heidegger is found explicitly defending himself against claims that he is a maudlin naysayer espousing a rampant agenda of nihilism. Referring to his 1929 inaugural address to the Freiburg academia, already much alluded to above, Heidegger is well aware that his suggestions that philosophy should make forays into the nothing in order to gain a greater comprehension of Being will undoubtedly implicate him as a nihilist, “people have seized upon and extracted ‘the’ nothing and made the lecture [“What Is Metaphysics?”] into a testament of nihilism.”
However with the passage of nearly thirty years as Heidegger corresponds with Jünger, he believes that a fresh and more informed approach to the nothing, once seemingly maverickly broached, will reveal that it was never a matter of presenting nothing in the sense of a negative nothing (des nichtigen Nichts) to be seen as the first and last goal of all representation and existing. Instead, Heidegger calls attention to the particulars of the “emblematic” question discussed above used to close the lecture with the hope of showing that his invitation in 1929 as well as in 1955 to incorporate the nothing with the Being question need not degenerate into a negative nihilism. Revisiting this question and carefully reviewing the way in which Heidegger wrote the final line of “What Is Metaphysics?,” “Why are there beings at all, and why not far rather Nothing (Nichts)?” shows that he deliberately capitalized the word “Nothing.” While it has already been mentioned that Heidegger does not lay claim to being the only philosopher to have used this question for the furtherance of philosophical inquiry, there is nonetheless a further distinguishing quality to his usage now evidenced by the conscious choice to write the first letter of the word “Nothing” in the upper case.

Pöggeler comments on the positive aspect of “destruction” which permeated Heidegger’s philosophy from its outset. For him a clear indication that Heidegger was embarking on entirely new paths comes through in the lecture “What Is Metaphysics?” and its closing sentence, “Why are there beings at all, and why not far rather Nothing?” The capitalization of the term “Nothing” only serves to further enunciate the unique direction of Heidegger’s new paths, “since he is not just repeating Leibniz’ question, which only sought to show the superiority of Being over Nothing.” In fact, for Heidegger, any use of this question that does not focus upon the Nothing, so indicated by
the deliberate choice to capitalize the very word, could be seen as an effort toward “restoring” the typical concerns of Western philosophy, more precisely known as metaphysics. Even as Heidegger was writing to Jünger in 1955 there were apparently efforts afoot to maintain the status quo of metaphysics by the usual use of the question, “Why are there beings at all, and why far rather Nothing?,” as Heidegger observes, “The contemporary attempts to restore metaphysics (die Metaphysik zu restaurieren) are fond of addressing the said question.”

But it is of the utmost importance to realize when attempting to situate Heidegger on the stage of Western philosophy and to appreciate the unique role he played that he was in no way, shape, or form advocating a “restoration” of metaphysics in the sense of merely repeating and maintaining the conventional dictates begun by Plato and brought to a zenith by Nietzsche. Rather than “restoration,” concepts like “destruction,” “overcoming,” and “end” pervade the Heideggerian vocabulary when describing his relationship to and vision for Western thinking. Incidentally these concepts, and so too the concerns they spawn in varying ways, cut furrows across the entire field of Heidegger’s lengthy career. The early phase, before “the turn” in Being and Time, shows Heidegger committed to a project of “destroying fundamental ontology.” After “the turn” in the later period proper, he is seen as repeatedly emphasizing the need to “overcome metaphysics” and also continually decrying the “end of philosophy.”

It is imperative, then, to pay close attention to Heidegger’s novel use of the well known philosophical refrain, “Why are there beings at all, and why not rather Nothing?,” and most specifically to the subtlety of capitalizing the very word “Nothing,” in order to fully appreciate the positive ramifications intended for philosophy and all Western
thinking, including theology. This requires on the part of philosophy a willingness to embark along with Heidegger upon untrodden paths whereby the nothing is honestly confronted and then integrated into its thinking. The bold assertion to focus on the nothing and its related collaborative concepts of “destroying” fundamental ontology, “overcoming” metaphysics, and the “end” of philosophy are not guide posts along Heidegger’s new paths that have as their final destination a bleak state of nihilism. The desire to avoid traveling on such a path that leads ultimately to a disorienting and alienating point of nowhere was brought to poignant expression by Nietzsche:

> What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? 

However, to accept Heidegger’s invitation to take uncharted paths that will indeed mean encountering the nothing foremost, as well as destruction, overcoming, and endings along the way does not necessarily entail a call to stray aimlessly toward a nothingness of confining emptiness. When Heidegger summons Western thinking to ask anew, “Why are there beings at all, and why not far rather Nothing?,” with special emphasis on “Nothing,” it is not his aim to hypostatize the nothing, rather it is an invitation to take a “differently construed path through another realm” (“andersgearteten Weg durch einen anderen Bereich”). Concomitant with traversing this virgin territory leading to new places without the threat of circuitous windings to eventual vacuity is the suggestion to think the tried and true philosophical question – “Why are there beings at all, and why not far rather Nothing?” – in a “transformed” manner. When Heidegger gave a subtle hint about the need to approach the question with renewed rigor by the capitalization of Nothing, he now explicitly states that the question should be asked in this “transformed”
way: “Why is it that everywhere only beings have priority, without our giving thought to the ‘not’ of beings, to ‘this nothing,’ i.e. to Being with regard to its essence?”

The upshot of transforming this classic question is therefore not to dwell on the nothing in order to take part in an absurd meandering that eventuates in an abyss. Rather, it is an admonition by Heidegger to let the wonder for the nothing “strike” the thinker and lead her to the meaning of Being in all its profundity. Along these lines of positive prospects that this question signals for Western thought on the Being question, Pöggeler offers the following paraphrase of Heidegger’s transformed question, “Why does Being, its fullness with the multiplicity of modes of being, move us, but not the Nothing, namely, that which withdraws and withholds itself in all this fullness and multiplicity.”

Despite the fact that it should be clearer that Heidegger’s true motivation for urging a sustained musing over the nothing was to advance the study of Being in dimensions that have long been neglected and not to promote a state of hopeless nihilism, it cannot be denied that the very suggestion to meditatively focus upon nothing automatically engenders some need to address the question of nihilism. While it is beyond the scope of this study’s parameters on several scores to engage in a full investigation of the phenomenon of nihilism, it is fitting nonetheless to examine the qualified manner in which the later Heidegger understands nihilism, especially as it relates to the nothing and most importantly to the question of Being. This will serve as an apt way to close this first chapter, since it will round out the ongoing attempt here to situate Heidegger on the stage of Western philosophy as a unique player.

That he in fact assumes such a unique and unprecedented role will be seen in the way that his special understanding of nihilism implicates the status of Western thinking
as being at a critical stage, so tellingly conveyed by the already briefly mentioned Heideggerian concepts of “the destruction of the fundamental project of ontology,” “the overcoming of metaphysics,” and “the end of philosophy.” Each of these expressions has a richness of its own for revealing Heidegger’s relationship to and evaluation of Western philosophy, but a concentrated attention will be paid to the ramifications surrounding the “overcoming of metaphysics,” since it relates most directly to achieving an authentic understanding of nihilism. As will be shown, the need for Western thought to overcome metaphysics is mutually conditioned by the need to overcome nihilism. Overcoming in both these aspects will lead not to a “restoration” (restaurieren) of thinking as usual, but rather to a more radical “recovery” (die Verwindung) of Western thinking to its true vocation, an attuned correspondence with the call of Being: “The recovery of metaphysics calls thinking into a more originary calling.”95

Despite the rather ethereal tone that accompanies the dual projects of overcoming and the rather ambitious goals they are intended to achieve, there is on Heidegger’s part a frank recognition that the very mention of nihilism, let alone including its overcoming or recovery within the grand scheme of an overcoming or recovery of metaphysics, will conjure up negative images that first must be honestly addressed if there is to be any movement whatsoever toward more lofty ends. In an effort to confront the negative vibes that are stirred by contemplating nihilism, Heidegger swiftly points out the source for such disquiet,

…according to the concept of the word, nihilism is concerned with the nothing and therefore, in a special way, with beings in their nonbeing. But the nonbeing of beings is considered to be the negation of beings. We usually think of the “nothing” only in terms of what is negated.96
Unsettling enough as it might be to realize that nihilism in a very confined sense concerns
the nothing of a particular entity – its not being present – the real force of nihilism’s
negative connotation and the ensuing feeling of discomfort lies in the fact that the nothing
invokes and assumes much broader and more inclusive parameters, “The nothing here
[that nihilism is concerned with] signifies, not the particular negation of an individual
being, but the complete and absolute negation of all beings, of beings as a whole.”

It is an understanding of nihilism on this far reaching scale that proves to be most
disturbing and so has lead to an avoidance on the part of most Western thinkers. Yet,
Heidegger firmly maintains that the first step in overcoming such a jaded notion of
nihilism in order to arrive at an authentic, appropriate, or “recovered” sense of nihilism is
to confront it head-on as opposed to the typical tendency to flee from it: “Instead of
wanting to overcome nihilism (statt den Nihilismus überwinden zu wollen), we must
attempt to first turn in toward its essence. Turning into its essence is the first step
through which we may leave nihilism behind us.”

Some of this initial discussion about nihilism should have a ring of familiarity to
it, since to a degree it is reminiscent of comments made in the previous section about the
nothing, and how the very mysterious depths of Being (der Abgrund) can interface with
the willing thinker at her very depths in the “heart’s core” (der Herzensgrund).
Heidegger admits of the natural reciprocity that obtains between discussions of nihilism
and the nothing, “Language demands that in the word nihilism we think the nihil, the
nothing…” While the question, “Why are there beings at all, and why not far rather
nothing?” inspired both concerns for the nothing, the primary emphasis here will center
upon the nothing of nihilism at a more systemic level that impinges upon the fate of
Western philosophy or metaphysics. The prior emphasis, by contrast, was primarily concerned with the individual level and the nothing described as the possible point of contact for the thinker and Being. Therefore, the earlier focus tried to indicate Heidegger’s mystical leanings, while the current effort is an attempt to show his broad based concern for the plight of Western thinking overall. In this vein, what Heidegger is hoping for is that the nudge of Western thinking to turn toward the essence of nihilism will lead to the realization that there are two kinds of nihilism – authentic and inauthentic – with the former being an indispensable component in furthering the meaning and truth of Being.

Philosopher Joan Stambaugh, who for decades has translated several of Heidegger’s later works and most recently in 1996 gave the English speaking world an alternative translation of *Being and Time* to rival Macquarrie and Robinson’s 1962 standard, states that, “what Heidegger calls true [authentic] nihilism has two aspects or factors: (1) that Being remains absent, and (2) that thinking leaves out, omits, neglects to pay heed to this remaining absent.”

Nihilism taken in its essential and most appropriate light is not merely the negation of a particular being or all of beings *in toto*, rather it is the simple yet often overlooked fact that Being has a dimension of nothingness, whereby Being withdraws, conceals itself, defaults, remains absent. Mention was made earlier in this study that early Greek thinking did have the opportunity to exist at a privileged time when Being more fully disclosed itself, thus enabling Heraclitus to make the astute observation that, “Being loves a self-concealing.” However, the onset of Western thinking proper in the writings of Plato and Aristotle also marked the beginning of an era when Being became less
revealing about itself, and so the self-concealing, absenting, defaulting, hiding aspect of
Being was easily ignored and overlooked. Authentic nihilism, the essence of nihilism in
its most appropriate sense, owns up to the fact that there is a nothing dimension to Being
itself, but is eclipsed by an inauthentic or inappropriate nihilism out of
“embarrassment” (pace Gadamer) that Being and nothing might have a certain degree of
affiliation. As a result, traditional metaphysics dispenses with the nothing as not worth
taking seriously and rushes to focus only on present and real beings.

Therefore, nihilism in its inauthentic or inappropriate from has been very much
intertwined with and entrenched in Western metaphysics since its inception and thus
influential upon the manner in which the meaning and truth of Being was articulated.
Heidegger goes so far as to equate metaphysics with this inappropriate nihilism,
“Metaphysics as metaphysics is nihilism proper.” Aware that such a claim is
“disturbing” and prone to misunderstanding, Heidegger attempts in several places to
clarify his aim of wedding traditional metaphysics and inauthentic nihilism in what
proves to be a problematic relationship:

This opinion has long been endemic to Western metaphysics. It co-
constitutes the ground on which all metaphysics rests. Most often,
therefore, one dispenses with “the nothing” in a brief paragraph. It
seems to be a universally convincing fact that “nothingness” is the
opposite of all being….Perhaps the essence of nihilism consists in not
taking the question of the nothing seriously.

But where is nihilism really at work? Where men [sic] cling to familiar
essents and suppose that it suffices to go on taking essents as essents,
since after all that is what they are. But with this they reject the
question of Being…To forget Being and cultivate only the essent – that
is nihilism.
Overcoming Metaphysics: Nietzsche’s “Will to Power”

Mired down in an inauthentic nihilism the Western philosophical tradition has not embraced the nothing, but rather opted to channel its efforts and resources to the study of beings; all of which lead to a further impoverishment of the understanding of Being. Metaphysics that continues along these lines must therefore be “overcome,” since it cannot help philosophy to move away from this inauthentic nihilism toward an authentic nihilism. Because Heidegger perceives such a deep-seated complicity and collusion between metaphysics and inauthentic nihilism, the route to an authentic nihilism is impossible via the paths of typical thinking:

Nihilism – that there is nothing to Being itself (mit dem Sein selbst) means precisely this for metaphysical thought: there is nothing to being as such (mit dem Seinenden als solchem). The very path into the experience of the essence of nihilism is therefore barred to metaphysics. Insofar as metaphysics in every case decides for either the affirmation or the negation of the being as such, and sees both its beginning and its end in the corresponding elucidation of the being from the existing ground, it has unwittingly failed to notice that Being itself stays away in the very priority of the question about the being as such.105

How is Western thinking ever to assume such a daunting task as the overcoming of metaphysics and its feeble corollaries of thought like inappropriate nihilism that are such formidable obstacles in arriving at a better understanding of the meaning of Being itself? One facile answer would be to turn to the work of Nietzsche, who before Heidegger believed that “European” nihilism was deserving of a close philosophical scrutiny, since it characterized a crisis in Western culture whereby the highest religious and moral bases of society had been undermined.106 Specifically, the devaluation of and loss of meaning for the highest value as expressed in the “death of God” means that there is no longer a unifying foundation for Western values and the onset of a crisis of long duration and uncertain resolution. Understandably then, Nietzsche sees the necessity for
his philosophical work to become engaged in an historical effort to “overcome” what he sees as a rampant and insidious nihilism marked by a sense of meaninglessness and resignation.107

From the previous discussions set forth it is clear that Heidegger’s view of nihilism is considerably different from Nietzsche’s. However, it was Nietzsche who moved Heidegger to reflect on nihilism and to appreciate that Nietzsche’s insights were essential to any proper understanding of it. A closer examination of the impact of the declaration “God is dead,” which occasioned Nietzsche’s interest in nihilism and also gave rise to one of Heidegger’s key later texts for theology, “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God Is Dead’” (1950), will have to wait until chapter four. Nevertheless, it is important at this time to recognize how Heidegger’s suggestions for overcoming nihilism involve an overcoming of metaphysics that markedly distinguishes him from Nietzsche’s similar interests, thus allowing Heidegger to retain on another score his unique place on the scene of Western philosophy.

Rather than delving into the fine distinctions that Nietzsche makes among the various kinds of nihilism which Heidegger extracted and showcased from the Nietzschean corpus, e.g. “incomplete,” “consummate,” “active,” “passive,” it is more meaningful to understand that the concept of “will” is integral in Nietzsche’s program to overcome nihilism.108 This is not shocking once it is recalled that Heidegger’s Nietzsche interpretations all hinged upon the “will to power.”109 Other well known Nietzschean philosophical principles such as the “eternal recurrence of the same” and the “Overman” are indeed treated by Heidegger, but only as filtered through the lens of the “will to power.”
The fixation Heidegger exhibits for Nietzsche’s will to power is most ironic at this particular juncture in the current project; since, as the will to power permeates all of Nietzsche’s philosophy it obviously becomes requisite in the effort to overcome nihilism. However, Nietzsche’s tack to deploy the will to power to overcome nihilism is at complete loggerheads with Heidegger’s own strategy to do the same! And the very locus upon which these two thinkers diverge is the differing sources each one emphasizes as the primary motivating force in overcoming nihilism. For Nietzsche, nihilism will be overcome, as well as metaphysics, by the initiative and under the auspices of humanity. Heidegger, on the other hand, believes that Being itself must take the initiative if nihilism and metaphysics are ever to be truly overcome.

Nietzsche’s standpoint makes perfect sense if it is remembered at the very start that his understanding of nihilism is at variance from Heidegger’s. The nihilism that Nietzsche inveighs against is the result of the highest and most cherished values having become compromised and so no longer able to provide means of guidance and stability for Western society, “value must therefore be thought of as that which supports, furthers, and awakens the enhancement of life. Only what enhances life, and beings as a whole, has value – more precisely, is a value.” Most poignantly then, if “God is dead,” as declared by the screaming madman in the town square of Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science*, then the traditional highest principle or value is defunct and the other lesser values will also be rendered ineffectual.

What are needed, therefore, are new values that would restore some semblance of hope and purposeful direction, which would in turn neutralize the pessimism and meaninglessness of nihilism. Thus in Heidegger’s estimation, it was the doctrine of the
will to power that led Nietzsche to propose the possibility of a rather sophisticated mechanism devoted to the promotion and maintenance of much needed new values, as observed by Laurence Lampert:

For Heidegger it is the metaphysical doctrine of will to power that enables Nietzsche to account for the positing of values, the devaluation of values and that further permits Nietzsche to develop a program...for the revaluation of values. In the history of Western thought, as seen by Nietzsche, the will to power of man [sic] expresses itself as value bestowing, as value destroying and finally as value bestowing in a new sense based upon the recognition of the will to power as the essence of things.\textsuperscript{111}

These comments by Lampert help to cast the contrast between Heidegger and Nietzsche in a sharp relief. The onus to discern and install new values for the enhancement of life and beings as a whole falls primarily on the shoulders of humankind and its resources. Helping to refine this distinction from Heidegger of how the primary role is given to the human person and at the same time showing the continuity in Nietzsche’s thought is Phillip Fandozzi who remarks, “what was needed was a new being, an ‘Overman,’ who would authentically respond to the will to power and complete the revaluation process.”\textsuperscript{112} All that would be needed now to show continuity at its utmost would be to include the “eternal recurrence of the same” into the current discussion, thus rounding out with precision what Heidegger believes to be Nietzsche’s conceptual triumvirate: the will to power, the Overman, and the eternal recurrence of the same. However, to adequately explain the role that the eternal recurrence of the same does play in the plight of Western philosophy would require quite a detour and distract from acknowledging the essence of the divergence between Heidegger and Nietzsche vis-à-vis the overcoming of metaphysics.

According to Heidegger, Nietzsche’s approach is doomed to failure; it will not succeed in the dual mission to overcome nihilism and metaphysics. If anything, nihilism
will actually be furthered and the status quo of metaphysics will be guaranteed. At the root of this flawed strategy is Western philosophy’s 2,500 year history of sidestepping the study of Being itself in order to study the Being of beings manifested in the permanent, the present and the real. When this abiding practice is coupled with the emphasis of modernity that it is completely incumbent upon the rational thinking person and her initiative, then the die is cast for nihilism and metaphysics to reach an apex rather than being overcome. Stambaugh is able to deftly summarize how Nietzsche unwittingly embraces key aspects of the very system he wanted to surmount,

Since for Heidegger Nietzsche conceived of Being as value, he remains stuck within the framework of subjectivity and nowhere gets near the dimension of what Heidegger calls Being. Nietzsche wanted to overcome nihilism by “affirming” life; Heidegger claims that Nietzsche completes nihilism (by conceiving Being as value and thus entrenching himself in the unconditional dominance of beings without the remotest possibility of questioning Being).113

Thus, any careless turn to Nietzsche for assistance in the project of overcoming nihilism and metaphysics is dashed. Even though Nietzsche moved Heidegger to reflect on nihilism, the initial understanding Nietzsche brought to the condition of nihilism (the demise of once vaunted values that enhanced life and beings as a whole) and its cure (the “will to power” exercised by rational “Overmen” to install new and improved values) quickly entangled him in metaphysics and two of the most basic tendencies of that tradition: the advocacy of the priority of humanity and the neglect of Being.114

By extolling these quintessential categories of metaphysics, Nietzsche does not merely fail to make strides in overcoming metaphysics and its ancillary concern of nihilism, but ironically he actually brings metaphysics to an unprecedented place, “With Nietzsche’s metaphysics, philosophy is completed (vollendet).”115 With this striking assertion Heidegger is not implying that philosophy or metaphysics is completed,
finished, or at an end in the sense that it has stopped or ceased. While metaphysics per se may have attained a point of impasse as far as its ability to cogently address the only matter that is worth questioning – the meaning of Being – it nonetheless is not at a terminal stage of despair. In fact, Heidegger sees only possibility and hope for another beginning looming at this critical juncture of completion or ending where philosophy and metaphysics now find themselves:

The end of philosophy is the place, that place in which the whole of philosophy’s history is gathered in its most extreme possibility.116

But with the end of philosophy, thinking is not also at its end, but in transition to another beginning.117

It is Heidegger’s recommendation, therefore, that philosophy not turn to Nietzsche in order to overcome metaphysics and nihilism. Despite his enticing self-proclaimed ambitions to overcome metaphysics, Nietzsche too must be “overcome”118 because of his complicity in formulating concepts that actually brought philosophy to a point of metaphysics par excellence. But at this point, philosophy is poised for a “most extreme possibility” and “another beginning” to which Nietzsche is owed a debt of thanks.

**Overcoming Metaphysics: Heidegger’s Meditative “Step Back”**

This new possibility and other beginning that await philosophy will be approached in a manner that dramatically shows how keen the differences were between Heidegger’s and Nietzsche’s philosophical projects, otherwise the contrast could be easily overlooked. Where Nietzsche is found on the one hand touting the will to power of the reasoned human subject as the aggressive means to re-institute lost or anemic values so as to dispel the blight of nihilism; on the other hand is found Heidegger who
enjoins Western thought to a more humble and meditative “step back” (“Schritt zurück”) as the only efficacious way to move toward the realization of philosophy’s other beginning and new possibility that overcome metaphysics and inauthentic forms of nihilism.

The introduction of Heidegger’s “step back” in tandem with Nietzsche’s will to power quickly promotes a sense of stark contrast between these thinkers over their specific mutual concerns to overcome metaphysics and nihilism. More generally however, the step back is indicative of the methodology of the later Heidegger regardless of his philosophical dialogue partner. Though Heidegger himself and most commentators insist on a continuity between the broad concerns found in the earlier and later Heideggerian writings, there is also a consensus that a marked shift in emphasis is noticeable after the publication of *Being and Time*.

In spite of the explicitly stated broad thesis of *Being and Time* to address the question of Being, “Our aim in the following treatise is to work out the question of the meaning of Being and to do so concretely.”¹¹⁹ this can be easily overlooked or forgotten because of Heidegger’s choice to focus on personal human existence as the privileged means of access to the study of Being, “Thus an analytic of *Dasein* must remain our first requirement in the question of Being.”¹²⁰ However, the period after *Being and Time* shows Heidegger’s preoccupation with Being now furthered along without the heavy reliance on his early analyses of human existence.

This “turn,” “shift,” or “reversal” (*die Kehre*) finds a most pointed articulation amidst the current discussion where Nietzsche’s will to power is juxtaposed with Heidegger’s step back as alternative means to better the fortunes of Western
philosophy, viz. the overcoming of metaphysics and nihilism. The will to power, as has been seen, is immediately ensconced with the capabilities of human existence to initiate and carry through a program that will eradicate philosophy’s woes of having “forgotten Being.” By contrast, the step back automatically conveys that a different role is to be played by the human person in the recovery of philosophy to its more originary task – an attuned correspondence with Being. To take a step back is not an invitation to passive resignation or quietism on the part of the thinker, but it is an indication of participation which acknowledges that the initiative and sustaining capacities to overcome metaphysics and nihilism rest with Being itself and not with the human and the resources of her personal existence. The French philosopher Dominique Janicaud adroitly synthesizes the importance of understanding the implications of Heidegger’s “turn” as well as its timeliness, “The overcoming is not the unilateral act of the thinker, it originates in Being itself, insofar as Being still emerges for us as worthy of thought in this epoch where metaphysics has run out of reserves and possibilities.”

Mindful that Heidegger’s step back suggests a different degree of participation between the thinker and Being than Nietzsche’s will to power in the project to overcome metaphysics and nihilism, it is now possible to more painstakingly investigate the step back. While this conceptual strategy surfaces in various places throughout Heidegger’s later works to perform different duties, it will be the focus here to show its merit for overcoming metaphysics and inauthentic nihilism. This will allow for closure in the ongoing effort to foster an appreciation for Heidegger’s position in Western philosophy and his vision for its revitalized future.
A key aspect in the preliminary phase of getting acquainted with the dynamics of the step back is to realize that despite its having a less assertive tone than Nietzsche’s will to power, it still entails a degree of arduousness for the thinker, “the step back out of metaphysics into its essential nature requires a duration and endurance whose dimensions we do not know.” One of the greatest fears is the fear of the unknown, and here again Heidegger is found goading Western thinking onto paths that are anxiety producing because of a lack of familiarity, “The step back points to the realm which until now has been skipped over…our thinking in a way leads us away from what has been thought so far in philosophy.” What is it that has been thought in philosophy away from which the step back guides thinking? As has been discussed above, philosophy has been most comfortable in entertaining the question of Being in light of beings that are present and real. For Heidegger, this approach tacitly acknowledges that there is a difference or distinction between beings and Being itself – the so-called “ontological difference” in accepted philosophical jargon already mentioned in the earlier section on the “forgetfulness of Being” – but it fails to truly engage the depths of the difference as such:

We speak of it, tentatively and unavoidably, in the language of the tradition. We speak of the difference (von der Differenz) between Being and beings. The step back goes from what is unthought, from the difference as such, into what gives us thought. That is the oblivion of the difference.

Careful consideration of the German word Heidegger uses here for “difference” ("die Differenz") in discussing the tried and true philosophical recognition that a distinction obtains between beings and Being leads Caputo to a greater precision about the implications of Heidegger’s step back, “Every metaphysics offers us some version or another of the difference (Differenz) but no metaphysics manages to think the differing itself.” However, when Heidegger encourages Western thought to overcome
metaphysics by taking a step back, it is not a step back into the customary ontological difference, (*Differenz*), but into the “differing” in the difference.

In order to make this fine distinction Heidegger introduces the term *der Austrag*, which is found to have various English renderings depending upon the translator. For example, Caputo translates *der Austrag* as “dif-ference,” while Krell, Stambaugh, and Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann render it as “settlement,” “perdurance,” and “contest” respectively. In any event, what is most important according to Caputo is to appreciate how the nuance in Heidegger’s word choice is expressive of the far reaching ramifications involved in the step back:

Dif-ference (*Austrag*) names what is differing in the difference (*Differenz*), the way in which Being and beings are borne or carried outside of one another yet at the same time borne toward one another. The dif-ference is thus somehow deeper than the more straightforward ontological difference, or, better, is the depth dimension in it.\(^ {126}\)

Therefore, in one fell swoop Heidegger’s step back into the “dif-ference” can lead to marked progress in the efforts to overcome both metaphysics and inauthentic nihilism. Metaphysics has labored hard over the centuries to think the difference between Being and beings. It understands Being vis-à-vis beings in conceptualizations that are most comfortable, i.e. the permanentized presence of real things. Yet, metaphysics did not gain access to the origin of this difference, the “dif-ference,” which directly enables the very event of appropriation – *das Ereignis*. But for Heidegger the step back does venture forth into this uncharted and rather mysterious territory, “The step back goes from what is unthought, from the difference as such, (*von der Differenz als solcher*) into what gives us thought (*in das zu-Denkende*)\.(^ {127}\)

While the main thrust of the preceding has been to clarify the significance of the dif-ference into which Western thinking is to step back in order to overcome
metaphysics, it cannot go unnoticed that some very characteristic Heideggerian terms were passingly introduced and hinted at in the process: “das Ereignis” (the event of appropriation) and “Es gibt Sein” (It gives Being). Because of the complexity of these concepts and the pivotal role they play in the later Heidegger’s understanding of Being, they are deserving of a fuller exposition. At this point however, what is most indispensable is a realization that in situating Heidegger on the stage of Western philosophy he is found desirous of overcoming metaphysics proper that has been so influential upon the philosophical tradition. This requires a radical and brave step back into a mysterious zone long overlooked called the “difference,” which touches upon the appropriative event of Being itself and further points to the donative dialectic of active differing between beings and Being – a difference that has for the most part been recognized in only its most superficial sense as a static distinction between beings and Being.

That there is a donative, granting, or bestowing activity worthy of notice in the differing difference between beings and Being is evident by a careful analysis of Heidegger’s exploitation of the German idiom “Es gibt.” Instead of translating the expression “Es gibt” as “There is,” as is customary, Heidegger chooses a literal rendering, “It gives,” as a helpful tool in discussing the meaning of Being,

In order to get beyond the idiom and back to the matter, we must show how this “There is” (Es gibt) can be experienced and seen. The appropriate way to get there is to explain what is given in the “It gives” (“Es gibt”), what “Being” means, which – It gives,…

Heidegger capitalizes upon the literal significance of an otherwise commonplace German idiom to stave off any clumsy attempt to understand Being by saying that it is
“something,” which would be yet one more compromise of Being’s dynamic mysterious depth for a more static understanding of Being as a being,

We say of beings: they are. With regard to the matter of “Being” and with regard to the matter of “time,” we remain cautious. We do not say: Being is, time is, but rather: there is Being (es gibt Sein) and there is time.\textsuperscript{130}

Heidegger offers a most sophisticated explication of the “It gives Being” that eventuates in his identifying the “It” with “the event of appropriation” or das Ereignis, “Accordingly, the It that gives in ‘It gives Being,’…proves to be Appropriation (als das Ereignis).”\textsuperscript{131} What is crucial at this point is not so much a thorough grasp of all the intricacies that enable Heidegger to arrive at the all important concept of Ereignis as it is to acknowledge that the step back into the differing difference between beings and Being leads to an awareness that Being does in fact possess a giving, granting, and bestowing quality. Moreover, the prime opportunity that this step back offers for the possibility of overcoming metaphysics and inauthentic nihilism is to foster an even deeper appreciation of the full nature of this giving quality of Being.

To begin with, to see Being within the dynamics of giving, granting, or bestowing helps to shed light on the long-established prejudice about Being’s relationship to presence. As has been discussed, Heidegger was often critical of the Western philosophical bias given to permanentized present beings over Being itself. Stepping back into the dynamism of the differing between beings and Being, however, accentuates the need to reorient the focus of philosophy away from static present beings and to the active coming-to-presence of Being itself:

Being, by which all beings as such are marked, Being means presencing. Thought with regard to what presences, presencing shows itself as letting-presence. But now we must try to think this letting-presence explicitly insofar as presencing is admitted. Letting shows its character in bringing into unconcealment. To let presence means: to
unconceal, to bring to openness. In unconcealing prevails a giving, the
giving that gives presencing, that is, Being, in letting-presence.¹³²

Undoubtedly, Heidegger’s desire to refocus attention upon the active engagement
of Being in a giving process that lets beings emerge into a state of presence and
unconcealment is rife with rich imagery that can go far in shifting interest to the dynamic
meaning of Being itself and away from static beings. However, of greater pertinence in
illustrating the methodology of the step back as a way to overcome metaphysics and
inauthentic nihilism is to heed another aspect of Being’s fundamental trait of giving.
Amidst the activity of Being’s donative presencing that enables beings to come to
presence and so be manifestly unconcealed, there is also that aspect of Being’s granting
that was long ago uttered by the early Greek thinker Heraclitus, “Being loves a self-
concealing.” As much as Western philosophy through its metaphysical tradition since
Plato and Aristotle may have ignored or been unable to tap into the full significance of
this realization, as discussed above this pre-Socratic philosopher nonetheless keenly
perceived that, “to Being there belongs a self-concealing.”¹³³

To accept Heidegger’s invitation to step back into the differing dif-ference (der
_Austrag_) that obtains between beings and Being in order to overcome metaphysics and
nihilism is to usher philosophy toward its other beginning and most extreme possibility,
which interestingly enough resonates with the early Greek philosophers who had a finely
tuned correspondence with the appeal of Being. Being gives, none too many would deny,
and even if most philosophical ink has been spilled to discuss the gifts of Being – beings,
entities, things – there has also been the tendency to narrowly misrepresent the giving of
Being as some kind of metaphysical cause or transcendental condition,¹³⁴ which actually
furthered the presencing, unveiling, unconcealing fixation to the detriment of
appreciating the absenting, veiling, concealing tendency of Being. Heidegger gives expression to the time honored practice of Western metaphysics to haphazardly take note of only one dimension of Being’s giving,

In the beginning of Western thinking [with Plato and Aristotle], Being is thought, but not the “It gives” (Es gibt) as such. The latter withdraws in favor of the gift which It gives. That gift is thought and conceptualized from then on exclusively as Being with regard to beings. A giving which gives only its gift, but in the giving holds itself back and withdraws, such a giving we call sending (das Schicken).\(^{135}\)

Caputo makes the most out of the “sending” image introduced here by Heidegger in order to relate a metaphor about sending a letter which greatly serves to demonstrate how a tremendously profound aspect of Being’s giving has for too long been overlooked and neglected. If Being in its letting be that gives presence to beings is likened to someone who composes and sends a letter, it must be realized that in this process the, “One who ‘sends’ a letter remains behind and in a sense is still concealed by the letter. The letter never adequately expresses his mind and may even more serve to conceal the real truth.”\(^{136}\)

The step back into the “dif-ference” between beings and Being is therefore a plea by Heidegger to meditatively recollect or remember the full range of activity implicit in the appropriating event of Being (das Ereignis) as It gives (Es gibt). Extremely important in this genuine recollection is a consciousness of the concealing event of Being. That this involves more of a meditative rather than a calculative type of thinking (to employ a vintage Heideggerian contrast) is evidenced by the fact that it requires a calm resignation on the part of the thinker that prior to this entity, being, or gift that stands before her, which may readily become the focus of an intricate analysis of reason, there is a giving that enables that which is present to be present as well as a withholding withdrawal. Fell calls this meditative remembering a “deference,” whereby the thinker
ceases to insist by virtue of her reason alone that what is is only what can be present and recollects deferentially to an event that has made the present entity possible. This giving event of Being, which always simultaneously holds back, is “prior to and a condition for our subjective willing, representing, proposing, imposing, reasoning about and calculating.”

Heidegger expends a great deal of energy at various points and for different purposes in his later writings on comparing and contrasting meditative or essential thinking with calculative thinking. While meditative/essential thinking is typically painted in a more positive light for its ability to enable philosophy to better grasp the meaning and truth of Being, it is not necessarily Heidegger’s attempt to uphold this type of thinking as a foil for the utter disparagement of calculative thinking. Instead, it is one more way to substantiate the overall thrust of Heidegger’s “turn” (die Kehre) which inaugurated and guided the latter portion of his career. In short, it is Being and not the reasoning human subject that initiates and sustains any genuine understanding of Being. As a result, the comportment of meditative recollection and remembering is respectful of Being’s primacy. To acknowledge Being’s primacy is in no way a suggestion by Heidegger for the thinker to assume an attitude of passive indifference. Rather, to meditatively step back and dwell within the depths of the differing dif-ference between beings and Being is the only way to respectfully follow Being’s lead and so move along the path toward a better understanding of Being’s truth and meaning.

Calculative thought, by contrast, is not consonant with the comportment of the step back, since “[It] races from one project to the next. Calculative thinking never stops, never collects itself.” By this frenetic activity, that so typifies the thinking associated
with the current technological era, it is unlikely that Being will be carefully thought through in all its mysterious depth. Instead, the focus will be upon the present entities, the beings, the what-is that easily lend themselves to computation, calculation, and manipulation, “such thinking lets all beings count only in the form of what can be set at our disposal and consumed.”¹³⁹ Accompanying this busied activity on things and their manipulation can be an exacting attitude of superiority and domination that is in stark contrast with the attitude of humility fostered by a meditative thinking that steps back, “Calculative thinking compels itself into a compulsion to master everything on the basis of the consequential correctness of its procedure.”¹⁴⁰

Therefore, the best hope of ever breaking out of the vicious cycle of calculative thought and the aggressive hubris that goes along with it is to embrace a meditative or essential thinking. It is this type of thinking that will engender a genuine recollection (Andenken), not just of Being’s primacy but also of the full nature of Being’s giving event of appropriation that lets what-is (beings) be present, “meditative thinking…contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is.”¹⁴¹ In contemplating the deeper meaning that resides in every being that is real and present in a recollective way, meditative/essential thinking “responds to the claim [or demand] of Being” (dem Anspruch des Seins).¹⁴²

Such a meditative and recollective disposition fulfills the requirement of Heidegger’s definition of philosophy discussed earlier. Philosophy is listening for the call of Being in order to achieve an attuned correspondence with Being. The step back into the differing difference between beings and Being that coincides with a recollective
posture of meditative thinking can lead philosophy to its “other beginning,” “its most extreme possibility” and so overcome metaphysics and inauthentic forms of nihilism.

Traditional metaphysics and its corollary of inappropriate/inauthentic nihilism have been in alliance with calculative thought to compromise philosophy’s response to Being’s appeal. As a result, Being has been understood mainly in light of beings that are actual and present with little acknowledgment of the dynamic event of appropriation whereby Being simultaneously gives beings into unconcealment and withholds itself in a concealed nothingness. To overcome metaphysics’ bias for beings and restricted notion of Being relative to beings, as well as inauthentic nihilism’s pejorative notion of nothing, requires a recollective step back into the depths of the difference between beings and Being. And for Heidegger what becomes of primary interest in this comportment of a meditative-recollective step back is the concealing, defaulting, absenting dimension of Being’s activity, which also encompasses the “embarrassing” issue of the nothing:

Recollective thinking (Andenken) has the task of attending to this concealment (Verborgenheit), in which unconcealment (Unverborgenheit) is grounded.\textsuperscript{143}

In the step back, thinking (Denken) has already set out on the path of thinking to encounter Being itself in its self-withdrawal (Sichentziehen).\textsuperscript{144}

According to Caputo, it is a “humble” step back\textsuperscript{145} accompanied by a meditative-recollective thinking that Heidegger urges for philosophy as the disposition of active response to Being’s appeal. To be party to philosophy’s “new beginning” and “most extreme possibility,” traditional metaphysics and its penchant for beings and limited appreciation of Being as disclosive revealing as well as inauthentic nihilism’s disdain of nothing must be overcome. As Heidegger recommends, this can get underway successfully if at the outset the thinker is receptive to the call of Being on Being’s terms,
which entails an openness to follow Being’s lead down otherwise strange, unfamiliar, even embarrassing paths, “But how can he do so without first being struck (betroffen) by what is authentic – by the default of Being (vom Ausbleiben des Seins) in its unconcealment?”146 Reminiscent of Plato’s dictum that all philosophy in general begins with wonder, it is Heidegger’s stance that philosophy may begin yet again with an entirely new epoch of promise by being “struck” (betroffen) by the nothing dimension of Being that holds itself back, absents itself, defaults.

After being “struck” with amazement that Being withdraws and “loves a self-concealing,” the philosopher must continue the overcoming process in philosophy’s new beginning and exciting possibility by a serious willingness to engage the depth of the meaning that Being in large part remains absent. Again, this is not done by the philosopher’s sole initiative or on her own terms, but rather Being itself sustains any confrontation with its mysterious depths:

Instead of such overcoming [yoked to the thinker’s pure willing], only one thing is necessary, namely, that thinking, encouraged by Being itself (vom Sein selbst angemutet), simply think to encounter Being in its default as such. Such thinking to encounter (das Entgegendenken) rests primarily on the recognition that Being itself withdraws…147

Fully aware of the strong possibility for philosophy to slip back into its familiar interests and accustomed ways after the initial stages of wonderment for and shallow wadings into Being’s self-concealing, Heidegger advises a tenacity that gives dramatic expression to the very gesturing involved in the recollective step back, “Instead of rushing precipitously into a hastily planned overcoming…thinking…lingers a while in the advent of the default, awaiting its advent in order to learn how to ponder the default of Being in what it would be in itself.”148 A willingness, therefore, to stay the course and patiently step back and meditatively ponder will lead to a better understanding of the
meaning of Being’s absenting into nothingness. For Fell, an important part of the lesson that accrues to the actively engaged yet docile philosopher is the realization that, “The present is made possible by what is absent from the present…”

Heidegger prefers the terms “promise” and “treasure” when referring to what awaits the “lingering” recollective thinker so as to encounter the full significance of Being’s absence or hiddenness:

Addressing in this way, while withholding itself in default, Being is the promise of itself (das Verspruchen seiner selbst). To think to encounter Being itself in its default means to become aware of the promise, as which promise Being itself “is.” It is, however, in staying away; that is to say, insofar as there is nothing to it.

Correctly thought, oblivion, the concealing of the as yet unrevealed essence (in the verbal sense of essential unfolding) of Being, shelters untapped treasures (birgt ungehobene Schätze) and is the promise of a find (das Versprichen eines Fundes) that awaits only the appropriate seeking.

Because Heidegger neglects to specify with any exactness what this promise and these treasures might eventually entail, a forceful objection could be leveled that Heidegger and his meditative-recollective step back fail to lead philosophy to another beginning or radical possibility. On one level this may be true if Western thinking is to rejuvenate itself by merely latching on to some definite promise or treasure that it can once again manipulate, control and dominate through the exercise of subjectively willed reason. However at another level, if an awareness is maintained that Heidegger’s guidance leads not so much to a tangible or quantifiable promise or treasure but rather to a renewed appreciation for the mystery of Being, then the centuries old history of metaphysics and inauthentic nihilism may be gradually and eventually overcome. Fell bolsters this claim by his suggestion to realize that when led by Heidegger to the ultimate destination of his meditative-recollective step back, philosophy is forced to recognize that
it bumps up against “the limit of intelligibility, an abyss, a mystery: nothing ascertainable.”

Therefore, strides are made in overcoming metaphysics because thinking is now directed away from the usual preoccupation with beings and deficient grasps of Being’s dynamism to the fullness of Being itself. This for Heidegger was never meant to be seen as a surmounting or transcending of metaphysics so as to “disparage” or “eliminate” its contributions to Western thinking. Rather according to Biemel, it is “by thinking through metaphysics [that] we should be brought to the point of thinking upon Being.” And this meditative-recollective thinking embodied in the step back into the dynamic depths of the differing difference between beings and Being leads ultimately back to a clearer resonance with the early Greek, pre-Socratic thinkers and their experience of Being, which “loves a self-concealing.” The overcoming of metaphysics is not a destruction or deconstruction but a retrieval and resourcement.

Strides are also made in overcoming inauthentic forms of nihilism, because in the process of being led back to the original thinkers and their more originary experience of Being that includes a hiding, defaulting, absenting dimension, there is a forced confrontation with the nothing. In Pöggeler’s estimation, “Heidegger believes that the nothing in non-Being – truth as concealing and as non-ground – must be thought as belonging to Being.” So nothing is not to be seen in its usual sense as the complete and absolute negation of all beings or of beings as a whole (nihilative nothing), since this would be inauthentic or inappropriate nihilism. Rather, the progress in the overcoming of this brand of nihilism is achieved when an appreciation is had for Heidegger’s insistence
that Being and nothing mutually employ one another “in a kinship whose essential fullness we have yet scarcely pondered.”

In the meditative-recollective step back that overcomes metaphysics and inappropriate nihilism Heidegger is challenging philosophy to think about the heretofore unthinkable. However, while thinking about such unthinkables – Being loves a self-concealing within the nothing – is a move out of the confines of traditional metaphysical thought, it nevertheless has a marked affinity with religious thinking. This leads Gadamer to make the perceptive observation of how the original German words used by Heidegger to explain the meditative-recollective step back for philosophy have connections to standard expressions of religious experience:

Is there a way of thinking that brushes against this unthinkable? Heidegger calls it “remembrance” [Andenken] and the dubious echo of “reverence” [Andacht] may well have been intended, in as much as the religious experience touches the unprethinkability [Unvordenkliche] of Being more than metaphysical thinking.

The cautious tone of Gadamer’s remarks helps to underscore the complexity that surrounds Heidegger’s relationship to religion in general and its more specific articulations in mysticism and theology. While his relationship to Christian theology will be studied in greater detail in the next chapter and andenken’s theological merit will be treated in chapter four, at this point the seeming affinity that Heidegger possesses with religion in his project to overcome metaphysics is invaluable. In the effort to situate Heidegger on the stage of Western thought, it is noticeable that the uniqueness of his role causes him to veer in directions that are shared more explicitly by religious traditions and their areas of related concern. Heidegger’s agenda to push philosophy to rethink the meaning and truth of Being outside the established parameters of traditional metaphysics takes him into mysterious and uncharted regions – the revealing yet concealing
nothingness of Being – which need not signal an endorsement of religion, mysticism, and theology; but which nonetheless is on common ground with the perennial interests and efforts of these traditions.

At times Heidegger does show in passing yet meaningful ways that the depth dimensions that encompass the Being question cannot help but wash over into religious concerns like the question of God. Most specifically, it has been borne out how the effort to overcome metaphysics and inauthentic nihilism requires a meditative-recollective step back into the differing difference between beings and Being that ultimately leads to a frank encounter with the nothing dimension of Being’s self-concealing. This is indeed a foray into the realm of the “unthinkable,” in Gadamer’s words, that simultaneously offers a formidable challenge to the typical metaphysical categories of expression while making a tenuous alliance with the usual categories of religious expression.

However in a passage of “What Is Metaphysics?” concerning the issue of the nothing in the course of metaphysical thinking, Heidegger points out how often times Western religion, so influenced by the force of metaphysics, has compromised its more natural abilities to plumb the depths of a mysterious region (an “unthinkable”) like the nothing. While it has been discussed how philosophy, under the guise of metaphysics and inauthentic nihilism, relegated nothing to nihilative non-Being – “the complete and absolute negation of all beings, of beings as a whole” – religion, specifically Christian Patristic theology, failed to broach the possible “promise” and “treasure” of the nothing and chose rather to reinforce the standing philosophical understanding (ex nihilo nihil fit) with an added nuance of God. Heidegger observes that, “Christian dogma…bestows on
the nothing a transformed significance, the sense of complete absence of beings apart from God: *ex nihilo fit-ens creatum* (From nothing comes-created being).”\(^{157}\)

For Heidegger the lost opportunity for both philosophy and theology was that, “The questions of Being and of the nothing as such are not posed,”\(^ {158}\) with the result that the “promise” and “untapped treasures” possible for the lingering thinker dwelling in the nothing dimension of Being were forgone. But had theology seized upon its natural inclinations and sensibilities to encounter something mysterious like the nothing, then it would have been “bothered” by or curious about the nothing and not so eager to dismiss it as a mere counter-concept of God. It is not only that God and nothing are juxtaposed as opposites to prove a point of contrast, but if theology were to pause and realize under the auspices of a well accepted theological doctrine that it is out of the nothing that God creates (*ex nihilo*), then perhaps the “promise” and “untapped treasures” of the nothing could have been a gem that leads to a greater understanding of the mystery of God. However for Heidegger, “no one [was] bothered by the difficulty (*Daher bekümmert auch gar nicht die Schwierigkeit*) that if God creates out of nothing precisely he [*sic*] must be able to relate/comport himself to the nothing.”\(^ {159}\)

While Heidegger could be diagnosed as having 20/20 hindsight with his assertion that philosophy’s ineptitude and indifference toward the question of Being in light of the question of the nothing led to a crippling of theology’s abilities and alertness to probing the meaning of God by means of the nothing, his insights still stand as a viable challenge for both disciplines as well as tentatively introducing the possible application of the concerns of the later Heidegger for theology on the question of God. Heidegger, the philosopher, assumes his unique place on the scene of Western philosophy with the
agenda to ask the question of the meaning and truth of Being anew. This will require an
overcoming of traditional metaphysics and inauthentic nihilism by taking a meditative-
recollective step back into the mysterious region of the differing difference between
beings and Being that ultimately includes a brave encounter with the self-concealing
dimension of Being within the nothingness.

Although no hasty transposition can be performed on this agenda in order to
make it more theologically compatible, it nonetheless has ramifications for contemporary
theology and its discernments of the God question. The “unthinkable” (pace
Gadamer) nature of the Being question requires an attitudinal humility to meditatively
and recollectively step back into mysterious regions untrod by customary systems of
thought with the hope of finding the “promise” and “untapped treasures” of illumination.
Likewise, the “unthinkable” nature of God requires a reflective lingering pause and
humble willingness to encounter the mysterious depths that may prove to be newly mined
conceptual gems in furthering the understanding of God.

Therefore, it was Heidegger, the “masterful thinker,” who encouraged Western
thought to a new artful and reverential thinking about the meaning of Being and so
distinguished himself from other philosophers and their contributions to the discipline.
Since Christian theology and its many concerns also fall under the umbrella of Western
thinking, then this may also prove to be Heidegger’s distinctive contribution to a related
field. However, what ultimately made Heidegger a “rare plant,” as recommended by
Nietzsche for the résumé of any philosopher, is that he remained a thinker. For Caputo
this is what allowed Heidegger to remain unto himself and so retain his unique status in
philosophy, as well as enabled him to reach out and contribute with distinction to any
receptive area of Western thinking, “Heidegger has remained his own man, neither mystic nor metaphysician, but rather, as he puts it himself so simply, a thinker.”¹⁶⁰
Notes

3 Ibid., 63.
4 Ibid.
7 Ibid., 132-133.
9 Löwith, 133.
15 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 189.
19 Ibid., 171.
28 Martin Heidegger, Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1963), 99. Author assisted in translation by Richard Rojcewicz, Ph.D.
Being is farther than all beings and yet it is nearer to [humanity] than every being, be it a rock, a beast, a work of art, a machine, be it an angel or God.” See also John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, 2d ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), 115: “…although [Heidegger] talks of Being in a religious or quasi-religious language, he has always made it clear that Being is not God.”


34 Heidegger, “The Eternal Recurrence of the Same and the Will to Power,” 182.


37 Ibid.


39 Prudhomme, 104-110.


42 Ibid., 153.


49 Ibid., 181-182 (emphasis added).


53 Ibid., 15.


60 Ibid.
62 Orr, 95-96.
64 Kovacs, 153.
70 Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, 1.
74 Caputo, Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay in Overcoming Metaphysics, 130.
75 Caputo, The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought, 128.
76 Caputo, “Openness to the Mystery,” 268-269.
77 Ibid., 269.
78 William J. Richardson, Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought, 4th ed. (Fordham University Press, 2003), 595.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., 145.
84 Ibid., 223.
87 Ibid.
91 Pöggeler, “Destruction and Moment,” 151.
93 Ibid., 317-318.
94 Pöggeler, “Destruction and Moment,” 151 (emphasis added).
97 Ibid.


Heidegger, “Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being,” 201.

Ibid., 205.


Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, 203.

Heidegger, “Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being,” 220.


Fandozzi, 9.

Behler, 17.


Lampert, 365.

Fandozzi, 23.

Stambaugh, 84.

Lampert, 367.


Heidegger, Being and Time, 1.

Ibid., 37.


Ibid., 49-50.

Ibid., 50.


Ibid.


Orr, 77.


Fell, 60.


Ibid.

Heidegger, “Memorial Address,” 46.


Caputo, Heidegger and Aquinas: An Essay in Overcoming Metaphysics, 149.
146 Heidegger, “Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being,” 225.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid., 225-226.
149 Fell, 56.
150 Heidegger, “Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being,” 226.
152 Fell, 61.
158 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
CHAPTER TWO: The Abiding Influence of Heidegger’s Early Theological Interests: “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion”

Martin Heidegger can, I dare say, be understood adequately only from out of his beginnings in which, I want to assert, he always remained and into which he was later to penetrate even further.

This observation was made by Hugo Ott, a professor of economic and social history at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau. There is a certain degree of credibility and relevance that should be accorded to Ott’s remarks that otherwise could be seen as a normal strategy toward understanding any historic personage. While Ott has published numerous articles on Heidegger, it was his biography, Heidegger: A Political Life (1993), which gained him the most recognition by placing him in the center of the ongoing debate concerning Heidegger’s involvement with National Socialism. If it is Ott’s conclusion, after doing extensive research to better comprehend the more controversial aspects of Heidegger’s life and thinking, that “only from out of his beginnings” can Heidegger be adequately understood, then there is a special merit in following Ott’s wisdom in the current study dealing with less inflammatory yet still complex dimensions of Heidegger’s thought.

The overall aim of the project at hand is to study the writings from the later phase of Heidegger’s career with the hope of discovering what these may offer to the contemporary theology of God. To that end, the previous chapter broadly situated the later Heidegger upon the scene of Western thought by noting some of his unique concerns which distinguished him from many others who have also assumed roles on the philosophical stage. The chapter concluded in a very economical and modest fashion by suggesting that the title of “thinker” would be the best way to appreciate the role
Heidegger played in the tradition of Western philosophy. Because of Heidegger’s oft-stated interests to promote an appreciation for genuine philosophical thinking, the label of thinker being immediately associated with his name would be acceptable even to him as a respectable way to sum up who and what he was for twentieth century Continental philosophy.

However such a concluding statement is also lacking in its very economy and modesty, particularly for many who are unfamiliar with all the niceties associated with the art of “meditative” thinking in Heideggerian jargon. To call Heidegger a thinker and to assign this role as his legacy to Western philosophy creates a yearning to want to learn more about this thinker, and more specifically his thinking to which an intellectual debt of gratitude is owed. It is precisely at this juncture of a desire for greater clarity where the insights of Ott become most apt and acute concerning the necessity of first examining Heidegger’s beginnings in order to arrive at a suitable grasp of the thinker and his thinking. Therefore, it is the hope of this chapter to build upon the somewhat terse conclusion of the previous chapter. If Heidegger “remained a thinker,” in the words of John Caputo, throughout his appearance on the scene of Western philosophy, then to truly understand the innovative contributions this thinker made there is a compelling need to go back to his “beginnings.” It is only from there that an adequate understanding of his noteworthy achievements can be attained.

But it is not to Heidegger’s “beginnings” in any generic or broad sense upon which the gaze will focus in the following pages, since such a tack would prove unwieldy and nonproductive for the parameters and goals of this chapter. Instead, there will be a very purposeful and discerning choice of Heidegger’s origins that will serve not only the
aims of the current chapter, but will also forge a continuity with the previous chapter and the chapters to follow. It is the theological and phenomenological “beginnings,” which clearly punctuate Heidegger’s early intellectual development, upon which this chapter will concentrate its efforts.

**Theological Beginnings: Personal and Professional Ambiguity**

While the selection of the theological beginnings in order to obtain an adequate understanding of Heidegger (the thinker and his thinking) fits neatly within the overall scope of this dissertation, it is by no means a purely arbitrary or prejudicial choice. In fact, Heidegger himself has expressly acknowledged the special prominence that his theological origins or background (*die Herkunft*) should retain in comprehending his intellectual development. It is well within the later period of Heidegger’s career that a well-known explicit autobiographical remark in this vein is made. Joseph J. Kockelmanns relates that in the early 1950s Professor Tezuka from the University of Tokyo paid Heidegger a visit so that both philosophers could discuss a number of issues of mutual interest. By 1953-54, Heidegger wrote a dialogue in which he touched upon the most important topics covered in these discussions. This dialogue was subsequently published in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* in 1959, and later translated into English as *On the Way to Language* in 1971.²

At one point in their exchange the issue of Heidegger’s interests in hermeneutics arises, to which Heidegger credits his previous theological studies and their specific concerns of interpreting the scriptures. Professor Tezuka admits that he knows too little of Christian theology to appreciate the link between hermeneutics and Heidegger’s seminary education, however he makes the telling observation that Heidegger is “at home
in theology.” And it is in response to this perceptive comment that Heidegger makes the glowing acknowledgment, “Without this theological background I should have never come upon the path of thinking. But origin always comes to meet us from the future.” (“Ohne diese theologische Herkunft wäre ich nie auf den Weg des Denkens gelangt. Herkunft aber bleibt stets Zukunft.”)³

While due caution must be exercised so as not to over romanticize this acknowledgment in order to promote a theological agenda, it nonetheless has been interpreted by a wide range of scholars as a legitimate testament having special self-revelatory force for Heidegger. Theodore Kisiel goes so far as to identify this as one of three important “experiential parameters” coming as it does near the end of Heidegger’s career. He believes that it is helpful on two scores. First, it shows that a true understanding of Heidegger derives from an appreciation for the “reciprocity between biography and philosophy.” Secondly, and with more biographical specificity, it illustrates Heidegger’s “personal engagement with his Christianity.”⁴

This later self-disclosive “experiential parameter,” as well as two earlier ones to be subsequently discussed that hedge Heidegger in at the start of his career, serve not only the purpose of justifying the necessity to play close attention to Heidegger’s theological beginnings, but they also help to point out the limited scope of his religious and theological interests. For Heidegger, religion and theology are Christianity. Caputo even calls this tendency of Heidegger’s reductionistic, “Under Heidegger’s hand, religion undergoes a double reduction: it is first of all reduced to Christianity, to the Greek New Testament, and then Christianity itself is reduced to and identified with ‘faith.’”⁵
Therefore, as the careful examination of Heidegger’s theological origins unfolds, it is helpful to bear in mind that these are very circumscribed.

Not only are Heidegger’s roots circumscribed in an academic or intellectual sense, it is also noteworthy and more important at this point to realize that these origins display a tumultuousness and tentative ambiguity on a deeply personal and existential level. Appreciating this dimension of Heidegger’s background was previously touched upon in a passing way by Kisiel’s astute remarks surrounding the later self-disclosive “experiential parameter” when he stated that in understanding the beginnings of Heidegger’s “way” there is a need to be conscious of the “reciprocity between biography and philosophy,” with especially attuned attention to Heidegger’s peculiarly personal engagement with his Christianity.

The tumultuousness and ambiguity that mark the “peculiar” engagement that Heidegger has with “his” brand of Christianity can be seen by referring to the two earlier autobiographical experiential parameters. First, in 1919 Heidegger wrote a letter to Father Engelbert Krebs, professor of Catholic dogmatic theology at the University of Freiburg. In this letter Heidegger officially announces his confessional turn to Protestantism,

> Epistemological insights, extending to the theory of historical knowledge, have made the system of Catholicism problematic and unacceptable to me – but not Christianity and metaphysics, these though in a new sense…I have not, by reason of the transformation of my fundamental standpoint, been driven to set aside the high assessment and deep esteem of the Catholic life-world for the vexing and barren polemic of an apostate…I believe I have an inner calling for philosophy, and that by answering the call through research and teaching I am doing everything in my power to further the spiritual life of man [*sic*] and work in the sight of God.  

Because this is a letter to a long-time personal friend and enthusiastic supporter, there are obviously layers upon layers of motivations and intentions that could be peeled away to
fully explicate the meaning of this correspondence. However this would steer the current chapter way off course. As long as the tone of honest and tactful struggle is detected relative to Heidegger’s relationship to Christianity and further how this redounds to his professional philosophical career, then an appreciation will be fostered for the extent of the tumultuous and ambiguous character of the “peculiarly personal” relationship he had with “his Christianity.” Such a spiritual conversion to the Protestant tradition from Catholicism and such a professional change from theology to philosophy for a man at age thirty, who from very early on was steeped in the Catholic faith and entered the Jesuit novitiate, explain the detectable tone of struggle.

The second earlier autobiographical experiential parameter that further heightens the pitch of tumultuousness and ambiguity to the point of contradiction surrounding Heidegger’s “peculiar” relationship to “his” Christianity surfaces in a 1921 letter to his student Karl Löwith. After having taken two courses with Heidegger, Löwith writes to Heidegger to express the philosophical gains he has acquired under Heidegger’s tutelage. Heidegger responds in a way that is at once revealing and puzzling when he says, “I am no philosopher. I do not presume even to do something comparable; it is not at all my intention…I am a Christian theologian.”

Even a cursory glance at this early autobiographical remark, when thrown in comparative relief with the immediately preceding remark, firmly establishes the peculiarity of Heidegger’s relationship with Christianity – marked not only by an acceptable wrestling with conscience that leads to shifts in paradigms but also by a more troubling indication of conflict that ends in glaring inconsistency. Respect can be had for the Heidegger in 1919 who relates that a heartfelt period of discernment has led him
away from Catholicism to Protestantism as the better way to articulate his Christianity, and how professionally this also lends to a shift from theology to philosophy. However, when within the span of two years it is recorded that Heidegger refutes a doting student’s accolades by saying that he is not a philosopher but a Christian theologian, then easily granted respect is compromised to doubt and even suspicion.

But too severe of a judgment of Heidegger’s apparent conflictedness could be misplaced. As it was in the case of the first letter to Father Krebs, this second letter is also freighted with all the typical baggage that coincides with any personal correspondence. Was Heidegger really aligning himself with theology over and against philosophy, or was he merely resonating with the themes of the first chapter of this work? In other words, it was shown in situating Heidegger upon the scene of Western philosophy that he enters and remains there with critical evaluations of philosophy’s past and present state (“forgetfulness of Being,” “end of philosophy”), which will require some radical overhauling if it is to ever fully realize its authentic mission to think the question of Being in the future (“overcoming metaphysics,” “stepping back”). This would be the sympathetic sentiments of yet another student, Hans-Georg Gadamer, commenting on the blatant irregularity of Heidegger’s assertion to Löwith that he is not a philosopher but a Christian theologian, “the young Heidegger himself had turned the phrase destruction of metaphysics into a password and warned his own students not to put him in the ranks of the ‘great philosophers.’”

The pattern that is hopefully emerging here validates Kisiel’s observations that to truly comprehend the very early Heidegger and the thought path upon which he embarked necessitates an appreciation for the reciprocal relationship that obtains between
Heidegger’s philosophy and his biography. This reciprocity means that each aspect necessarily mutually conditions and influences the other. A point at which this interdependence is most striking and germane is in the “peculiarly personal” relationship Heidegger has to “his Christianity,” a peculiarity distinguished on the one hand by a very tidy delineation, whereby Christianity is theology and theology is Christianity. On the other hand, the peculiarity is marked by restlessness, tentativeness, and even reversal. Thus, when Heidegger near the cusp of his career pays homage to his theological origins as being determinative of the shape that the path of his thinking took, it is an exciting invitation to go back to these beginnings with hopes of achieving a thoroughgoing understanding of his thought.

Nevertheless there is a need to proceed with caution, since a temptation in an endeavor such as the one at hand could be to a rushed judgment. After quickly noting the influence of theology present during Heidegger’s period of “juvenilia,” a seeming easy step based on a tenuous correlation could be made to then formulate conclusions that enumerate Heidegger’s influence on theology, specifically the theology of God. This, however, will not be the course taken in this dissertation. Beginning with this chapter and its careful study of the complexities surrounding theology’s influence on Heidegger’s early period vis-à-vis his peculiarly circumscribed and erratic relationship with Christianity, a more deliberate method will be embraced which will eventually lead to more well grounded conclusions concerning the later Heidegger’s contributions to contemporary theologies of God. This same methodological observation was made by István Fehér in an essay studying Heidegger’s unique notion of “atheism” as it applies to philosophy, “the relation between Heidegger and theology, far from being one-sided, is
rather reciprocal, not conceivable purely in terms of the question of how Heidegger influenced theology, but equally to be treated in terms of the decisive influence theology exercised on Heidegger’s path of thinking.”

Therefore, it is with firm footing that a careful analysis of Heidegger’s influential theological origins may proceed, well aware that these were always filtered through two important qualifiers that touch upon different levels of his existence. First, there is the more intellectual and academic manner by which Heidegger confines theology to Christianity. Second, and potentially more problematic, is Heidegger’s peculiar relationship to Christianity that is actualized through his personal faith convictions. While this has been painted thus far as unsettled and even unsettling, it should be borne in mind that these fragile beliefs are nonetheless those which mutually propel Heidegger’s thought early on, and, for some commentators, sustained his thought throughout, though with mixed success at his being able to authentically integrate these faith stances with his life’s work and choices. For example, Ott maintains that in writing Heidegger’s biography in order to investigate his “mentality” and so understand him “from inside,” a point of recurring fascination was the “things” that Heidegger clung to, for instance “the fact that he clearly never broke free from the faith of his birth, [and] that he lived all his life in the shadow of this conflict.”

Likewise Gadamer, devoting extended commentary to Heidegger’s curious declaration “I am a Christian theologian,” concludes that from this strange statement it may be deduced that, “it was Christianity once again that challenged the thought of this man and held him in suspense.” Although Heidegger never actually was a theologian in the professional sense, he nonetheless remained a “frustrated” theologian. According to
Gadamer, if being a theologian were to mean expending one’s energies solely toward the explication of the vicissitudes of faith, of what it might mean to speak of God, then Heidegger would have been more at home in practicing theology per se. But because theology proper speaks directly about God, this made Heidegger keep the distance of a detached yet deeply interested observer, since, as Gadamer says, “It was clear to Heidegger that it would be intolerable to speak of God like science speaks about its objects; but what that might mean, to speak of God [faith] – this was the question that motivated him and pointed out his way of thinking.”

The precise nature of the relationship that Heidegger feels exists among faith, theology, and philosophy deserves greater explanation but is beyond the spatial allowances of this chapter. It is essential now as this study enters seriously into the initial phases of Heidegger’s trajectory of theological origins to realize that the “peculiarly personal relationship” that Heidegger has to “his Christianity” centers on faith – what it might mean to speak about God – and all the precariousness by which he possessed it and all the seriousness by which he acknowledged it.

While there are several places along the trajectory of Heidegger’s theological origins where an initial entry could be made, this chapter will proceed by selecting the period encompassing his early Freiburg years. From 1919 to 1923, Heidegger taught philosophy at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau as a Privatdozent and assistant to Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. It is specifically the course entitled “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion” (hereafter the “IPR” course) from the winter semester of 1920-21 that will receive a close investigation in the following pages. This course will provide a fitting starting point for becoming familiarized with
Heidegger’s theological origins, not just because it is a clear forum where Heidegger explicitly presents his more mature theological interests, refined after a gestation period of nearly twenty years; but also because the “IPR” course underscores the peculiarly personal relationship he had with Christianity. Regardless of the noted element of struggle present in this relationship, ranging from tumultuousness and ambiguity to inconsistency, it nevertheless was a relationship that was undergirded by faith. Heidegger’s emotional and personal possession of faith was clearly more prone to fluctuations than was his intellectual acknowledgment of its appropriate place in theology. Faith in this regard remained more constant.

The Early Freiburg Period: 1915-1923

Before moving directly into an analysis of the religion course which punctuates this phase of Heidegger’s career and provides an invaluable resource for appreciating the theological origins which Heidegger at times reminisced about so glowingly, it is imperative to first negotiate yet another conundrum relative to his treatment of the “IPR” course as well as several other early lectures. The intrigue involves the editorial process used to select the manuscripts to be incorporated into the multi-volume collection of Heidegger’s works better known as the Gesamtausgabe.

Because the editorial machinery and machinations that initiated the process for compiling the Gesamtausgabe are significant and interesting, and because they will continue to influence its compilation until the projected completion date in 2006, they could easily become lengthy topics unto themselves. As a result, the interests of this chapter and those of the dissertation overall will be most efficiently addressed by mentioning briefly a few recent scholarly revelations. These will bear directly on how the
early lecture courses at Freiburg with overt religious themes were part of the project to assemble Heidegger’s collected works. Awareness that intrigue surrounds the editorial work of Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe*, some of which is the direct result of his own doing, helps to appreciate the tone of caution that has been consistently advanced regarding the approach to and integration of Heidegger’s theological origins. Specifically, how is it possible to reconcile the well known magnanimous gesture Heidegger makes concerning the influence of his theological origins (“Without this theological background I should have never come upon the path of thinking.”) with the recently documented reluctance on his part to specifically acknowledge the theological traditions that were so prevalent and readily identifiable in this early Freiburg period?

Heidegger’s hesitancy to go one step farther and specify the “theological origins” to which he claims a debt of gratitude is easily manifested by his refusal to make all of his early Freiburg writings immediately available so as to ensure their inclusion in the final edition of his collected works. Most of the pioneering scholarly work in English that recently discovered this strange maneuver is to be credited to John van Buren, who catches Heidegger in yet another inconsistency by discussing the deliberate downplaying of the blatant theological origins during this first Freiburg era:

> Though maintaining that ‘thinking’ is really ‘thanking,’ the later Heidegger was...often puzzlingly reluctant to acknowledge his profound indebtedness to those philosophical traditions that originally helped to put him on the way of the Being question in his early Freiburg period, such as the young Luther, Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Aristotle’s practical writings, Husserl’s *Sixth Investigations*, and Dilthey.14

In contradistinction to the emphatic and fervent admiration that Heidegger lavishes upon his theological origins in the early 1950s, there is ambivalence and wavering toward this background in the 1970s when the rhetoric could have been
actualized by a decision to include the manuscripts of all early materials that could then permanently substantiate an otherwise passing quip of praise. While Kisiel concurs with the ambivalence in Heidegger’s evaluation of his “youthful thoughtpaths,” he also goes further by stating that Heidegger looked “unfavorably” on these origins. This sort of estimation is diametrically opposed to Heidegger’s positive assertion that, “Without this theological background I should never have come upon the path of thinking.” Kisiel points out that the unfavorable assessment of these once lauded youthful thoughtpaths – judged to have rightly guided the overall direction of the thoughtpath with continuity – comes through in the negative expressions Heidegger used when referring to them, “as mere byways (Umwege), errant ways (Abwege), blind alleys (Irrgänge), and a trace of the way (Wegspur)”\(^1\)\(^5\) through the history of Western philosophy.

Instead of moving directly on the straight and narrow of the way or path by the good offices of the theological traditions Heidegger was exposed to and nourished by, he was detoured on to some back roads by these traditions which merely distracted him at certain points in his formative years. Amazingly, such specifically identified theological perturbations sidetracking Heidegger included the New Testament and the young Luther\(^1\)\(^6\). The dismissal of Luther’s influence by Heidegger, so indicated by Kisiel, as just an unfortunate diversion is most remarkable from the perspective of this chapter and its efforts to expose the impact of Heidegger’s theological origins. However, as it has become more apparent that Heidegger had a decreased appreciation for his theological background in the final days of supervising the shape of his collected works, then perhaps the slighting of Luther’s contributions was actually a purposefully placed degradation to cause not only confusion about the influence that theologians of Luther’s stature had on
his work, but also to destroy completely any ability to neatly trace the line of his development back to theology.

Such an alleged strategy on Heidegger’s part would allow him the opportunity to effectively disinherit his theological origins, since the downplaying of Luther would be tantamount to removing a key structural beam supporting the very topics covered in the two Freiburg religion courses. It is Pauline theology which factors heavily in the “IPR” course and obviously Augustine in the summer 1921 “Augustine and Neoplatonism” course, and so to disavow Luther’s presence would be essentially to rob them of their ultimate vivifying theological source. Caputo helps to highlight the foundational significance that the theology of Luther exerted whenever Heidegger delved into the thought of Paul or Augustine: “He took his lead not from scholastic theologians like Aquinas, Scotus, and Suarez but from Pascal, Luther, and Kierkegaard, who in turn lead him back to Augustine and Paul.” The extent of Luther’s felt presence in Heidegger’s musings over Paul in the “IPR” course will become more apparent when the foregoing analysis unfolds; however, what is important at this time is a recognition that Heidegger was glaringly inconsistent at various levels when appraising his theological origins. At one level, he was loath to approve the inclusion of courses he taught with clear religious thematic orientations into his Gesamtausgabe. At another level, Heidegger deals a more crippling blow to his theological background. Leaving nothing to chance that perhaps unapproved manuscripts of these religion courses would surface in the form of credible student notes or protocol minutes, Heidegger purposefully goes on record (in various ways) denouncing the importance theological traditions, i.e. Luther, had upon his thought. Therefore, the early Freiburg religion courses were merely detours away from
the true philosophical paths, and furthermore could lay no real claim to having been motivated and sustained by thought steeped in rich theological questions spawned by a prodigious religious thinker like Luther.

With all the efforts to cover his theological tracks, it is obvious that there was something troubling Heidegger at a deeper level as he performed one of his final scholarly acts of putting his *imprimatur* on the collected writings. The only way that these early Freiburg lectures were to be included would be as supplements, and this decision was not finalized until 1984, eight years after Heidegger’s death. Were they being relegated to supplemental status for the sanguine academic reason that Gadamer offers, namely because Heidegger did not think that they belonged to his authentic corpus since they did not yet make the real breakthrough to the Being question? Or, was the source of Heidegger’s guardedness about these writings indicative of something stirring at a deeper level? For instance, van Buren has dubbed some of the early Freiburg lectures the “dangerous supplement,” so as to infer that granting these early works a more legitimate status suitable for a greater public dissemination and access might reveal a source for Heidegger’s thinking that would somehow be embarrassing or damaging to his legacy of thought. Van Buren is quick to argue that such motivations would not come only as the last wishes of Heidegger himself, but would also find support among many commentators of Heidegger who themselves wish to monitor the ongoing formation of the Heidegger canon by eliminating early sources that could be deemed “apocryphal” if their inclusion might compromise the officially sanctioned methods to study and interpret Heidegger.
Likening the clamor brought about by the recent attention to the scholarly potential of these early works to the uproar occasioned by the exposure of Heidegger’s deep Nazi affiliation, van Buren states:

There has been much talk of a type of “damage control” exercised by orthodox Heideggerians on Farias’ and Ott’s documentation of Heidegger’s involvement with National Socialism, but what about the possibility of the damage control on the discovery of the dangerous “supplement” of his youthful writings that threatens to upset the Official Story?…This study of Heidegger’s youthful writings takes up the challenge of infiltrating Heidegger, Inc., demythologizing the *mythos* of the Official Story about the early development of his thought, and telling a version of the unofficial story that has been rumored for years.20

While van Buren’s tone may be too fiery and polemical to embrace wholesale in this current study, his insights nonetheless can provide a wise reference point for endorsing the merit of this chapter in the overall scope of the dissertation. As this chapter devotes time and energy to the very early phase of Heidegger’s career, it might initially appear incongruous, since the stated long term goal is to decipher what the later Heidegger has to offer to the contemporary theology of God. However, van Buren offers support for the need to approach the early works with excitement and due caution (already stressed) as a hopeful means to better understand the reason why certain issues preoccupy the later Heidegger and how these may redound to theology. And if a link can be made specifically between blatant early theological interests and later more veiled points of theological contact, then success will have been achieved in van Buren’s recommended strategy – polemics aside – of obtaining a better understanding of Heidegger by “playing off” the youthful works against the later Heidegger: “The young Heidegger – this Heidegger earlier than the early Heidegger [of *Being and Time*] – can be of service in finding the Heidegger or better, the Heidegger later than the later Heidegger, as well as ways of thinking that no longer directly bear Heidegger’s seal.”21
However, it is not the aim to establish a direct and facile correlation between the very early Heidegger’s overt dabblings in theology and the later Heidegger’s philosophical concerns that have theological application. This would defy the approach assumed in this work to always maintain an appreciation for Heidegger and his work as an evolving organic whole. Instead, it will speak more loudly with resonances across disciplinary lines if these early theological interests are perceived to be foundational in the sense that they continued to exert a quiet yet profound influence on Heidegger, thus validating his encomium, “Without this theological background I should never have come upon this path of thinking.” In other words, it is appreciating the overall effect that theology had on Heidegger’s way of thinking and approaching philosophical issues that lingered forcefully throughout his career.

Therefore, the hope here is to be able to dwell comfortably within the throes of a seeming irreconcilable tension between the conflictual ways that Heidegger views his interface with theology during the early Freiburg period. This contradictory tension is articulated on the one hand by Heidegger’s much referred to emphatic declaration crediting theology for the perduring influence it has had upon his overall path of thinking (“Without this theological background I should never have come upon this path of thinking.”). While on the other hand, there has been a calculated effort on Heidegger’s part to minimize the effects that his early theological interests had upon his work, so much so that Heidegger’s one time interest in a figure like Luther was dismissed as a mere distraction that detoured him away from his genuine and sole path of thought – the question of the meaning of Being.
Appeal is again made to Luther, since learning to dwell comfortably in this otherwise tensile environment of opposing perspectives leads to the discovery that a prominent theologian did in fact have a lasting impact on the spirit of Heidegger’s work, which has been brought forth in another place of van Buren’s scholarship. Gadamer was cited earlier as offering a reason why Heidegger may have been reluctant to immediately incorporate into his collected works certain writings from the early Freiburg period, such as the “IPR” course, because Heidegger was not certain that these lectures had made any substantial contribution to the Being question. In a direct refutation of Gadamer’s explanation, van Buren offers the observation that Luther’s animating influence actually spills over pronouncedly from the religion courses into a philosophy course during that time in Freiburg with the effect of helping promote the Being question in a manner that strikingly presages the tack widely employed by the later Heidegger.

It can be recalled how in chapter one’s efforts to situate the later Heidegger upon the scene of Western philosophy, the overall mission statement of philosophy was put forth. For the later Heidegger, philosophy’s main objective should be to strive for an “attuned correspondence with Being.” Essential to advancing the question of Being by means of such a careful and receptive listening for the call of Being is to break out of the misguided categories of metaphysics, which have dominated the way Western philosophy has approached the meaning of Being since Plato and Aristotle. So part and parcel of the later Heidegger’s more meditative and passive approach to the study of Being is a related need to “overcome” metaphysics and thus realize that philosophy, as it has been practiced for over two millennia, has come to an “end.”
This revisionist and “destructive” tendency, so operative in the later Heidegger’s philosophical wranglings, was also detectable in some philosophical projects of the early Freiburg era. What is most important to comprehend is that this deconstructive spirit that vivifies the more proper philosophical concerns of both the juvenile and mature Heidegger owes its basis to the fruits of Heidegger’s theological interests, which found an opportunity for expression in the early 1920s religion courses taught at Freiburg. This is a significant contribution made by van Buren’s research, but not in a generic way or with a general reference to Heidegger’s early theological preoccupations. Rather, with a high degree of precision and specificity, van Buren pinpoints the influence of Luther upon the young Heidegger. At first this may seem to be of little consequence, since it is fairly understandable that Luther could be a logical driving force behind courses focusing on Paul and Augustine. However, van Buren’s unique discovery about the influence of Luther is that it goes beyond the boundaries of the early religion courses and can also be seen giving impetus to a subsequent philosophy course on Aristotle. Granted that this is not an impetus that would be as readily detectable as it would be in the religion courses where Heidegger’s topical expositions of Paul and Augustine intersects neatly with Luther’s topical interests on the same. Instead it is a more subtle influence, not attributable to topical overlay but to a dispositional style and spirit. Where Heidegger once relied upon the theological acumen of Luther to inform his religion courses on Paul and Augustine, he now widens his embrace of Luther by adopting his methodology in the service of philosophy. For van Buren, Heidegger’s development of a theologian’s methodology to advance philosophy is of great moment, since it not only guides the efforts of a few philosophy courses offered in the early 1920s, but also anticipates the
main philosophical agenda that will consume the efforts of the later Heidegger well into the 1970s. As van Buren observes:

The young Heidegger saw himself at this time as a kind of philosophical Luther of western metaphysics. In WS [winter semester] 1921-22 and in his other courses on Aristotle, Heidegger modeled his project on Kierkegaard and especially on Luther’s *destructio*, from which he derived his odd philosophical term “destruction” (*Destruktion*). ...After the quasi-Lutheran destructions back to primal Christianity in his two religion courses of WS 1920-21 and SS [summer semester] 1921, it was in his first lecture course on Aristotle in WS 1921-22 that Heidegger now ventured the more ambitious project of a quasi-Lutheran destruction of 1) the entire philosophical tradition based on Aristotle...and 2) Aristotle’s metaphysics itself, so as to effect what he already in WS 1921-22 called “the end of philosophy”...Again following Luther’s...appreciative readings of key Aristotelian concepts...Heidegger’s destruction prepared the way for uncovering and repeating on an ontological level the historicity of factical life in 1) primal Christianity and 2) Aristotle’s own practical writings, so as to effect what he called a new “genuine beginning” for the question about Being.22

Though multifaceted, these remarks from van Buren actually convey a succinct synthesis that allow for a well informed segue to the next portion of the chapter devoted to a fuller analysis of one of the two religion courses Heidegger taught at Freiburg. It provides for a “well informed” movement, since it stresses the ongoing observations that despite the erratic posture that Heidegger assumed in relationship to his early theological background, it was nonetheless real: he was a Jesuit candidate for the priesthood and a theology student who was steeped in and intrigued by a wide array of theological traditions ranging from Paul to Eckhart; he did teach courses with religious themes where his previous theological exposure could find expression in a public forum.

However, despite these verifiable and objective résumé like facts, van Buren’s conclusion also lends to a smooth segue because it captures the more intangible effect that theology had upon Heidegger. Luther becomes a very specific reference in this regard. It is not just Luther’s “theology of the cross” that becomes a topical content piece
that helps Heidegger design his syllabi for the two religion courses; instead, it is the elusive yet lasting attitudinal stance toward theological method which Heidegger admires in Luther. While this methodological spirit is described as “destructio,” it has been discussed in the previous chapter that the actual goals sought after in the implementation of this or related strategies by the later Heidegger are very nuanced. Nevertheless, it is important here to conceive that the animating force of Luther’s revisionism in theological circles pervaded Heidegger’s later philosophical interests in a very pronounced way. Thus the truly distinctive refrains of the later Heidegger to “overcome” metaphysics, and to “destroy” fundamental ontology have unmistakable resonance with Luther’s destructio.

Therefore, in proceeding to examine more closely the content of Heidegger’s early lectures on Paul, there is now an appreciation for the need to carefully maintain a discerning glance in order to better determine what it is about Heidegger’s theological background that truly affected him in a sustained manner. This will avoid passing off Heidegger as a “closet theologian,” while simultaneously leaving open the possibility that the later Heidegger does offer insight into religious matters and more specifically can have implications for contemporary theologies of God in a postmodern climate.23

“Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion” (Winter Semester 1920-21): The Confluence of Phenomenology and Theology

Equipped with an appreciation that the early Freiburg period was a point in Heidegger’s career where theology very openly played an important role, it is now possible to focus directly on the specific content of these theological interests. Because Heidegger only taught two courses in the early 1920s with patent religious themes, the
challenge to decipher his theological preoccupations is greatly lessened. By completing a
diligent and selective analysis of Heidegger’s lectures for the “IPR” course, a meaningful
grasp of the specific content of Heidegger’s theological interests will be achieved.
However, it is not just a matter of being able to identify and list Heidegger’s specific
theological pursuits. Such a fragmented approach would only isolate Heidegger and lock
him into a small phase of his overall path of thinking. Rather keeping in mind the thesis
of the dissertation to discover whether the later Heidegger contributes or detracts from a
theology of God, these early theological themes are unearthed and then used as continual
points of reference to see if their influence continued and thus resurfaced in some form,
or if they were simply episodic and never again detectable.

One further caveat should also be borne in mind before proceeding. As it was
previously noted, a ground swell of intrigue and debate accompanied the editorial process
deciding whether or not to include these particular lectures in the final edition of
Heidegger’s Collected Works. However in April of 1984, the fifth prospectus of the
editorial compilation project stated that the literary executor, Hermann Heidegger, had
given the nod to publish the extant manuscripts of these courses as a “supplement.”
Subsequently in 1995, the two religion courses (“Introduction to the Phenomenology of
Religion” and “Augustine and Neoplatonism”) were included in volume sixty of the
growing Gesamtausgabe under the title Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens. Because
at the time of writing this chapter there had yet to be a full English translation of these
texts, the following analysis relied on the original German as well as an extensive and
complete English paraphrase of the “IPR” course rendered by Theodore Kisiel. His
translation and commentary as well as the insights of Thomas Sheehan and Otto Pöggeler
are critical, since for many years they were the only scholars allowed access to the
manuscript material associated with the religion courses.25

It is noteworthy that reaching a final form of the “IPR” course was especially
challenging, not only for Kisiel’s English rendering and Sheehan’s and Pöggeler’s
analyses, but also in the editorial efforts striving to develop a suitable German version.
This is the result of the fact that only eight of Heidegger’s own manuscripts from the
thirteen courses he taught during this time at Freiburg are extant.26 The missing
manuscripts for the “IPR” course and five other courses meant that the published
German, as well as the paraphrased renderings and commentaries in English, were based
on transcripts of student notes. Whether or not these missing lectures were intentionally
destroyed by Heidegger himself or others, or simply perished in less dramatic ways, it is
essential to realize that the following treatment makes recourse to the primary sources in
a very different manner than usual.

A survey of the “IPR” course outline in Appendix-1 helps to quickly establish the
content parameters of Heidegger’s theological foray. Synthesizing Parts One and Two of
the course leads to the reasonable hypothesis that the main objective here is to discover
what is “primal” or “original” Christianity as expressed in the factual faith lives of the
first Christian communities, viz. Paul’s Galatia and Thessalonica. While this is a fair
gleaning from a cursory study of the outline’s topical headings, it remains the work of the
following pages to convert this hypothesis into an informed conclusion in order to further
establish continuity with what lays behind in chapter one (the unique role that the later
Heidegger played on the stage of Western philosophy) and with what lies ahead in future
chapters (the possible contributions the later Heidegger makes to the theology of God).
Earlier in this chapter it was brought forth that Heidegger’s very circumscribed notion of religion and theology as Christianity was to be heeded as a cautionary point when beginning a study of the effects of Heidegger’s theological origins. It was even pejoratively suggested to be a “reductionist” tendency. However at this point, with all due respect for the need to acknowledge Heidegger’s limited exposure and appreciation for matters theological, it is now possible to see a more positive aspect to this seeming negative delimitation.

For instance in Heidegger’s very desire to understand and explicate “primal Christianity” (Urchristentum), there is a marked resonance with a distinctive attribute of his later philosophizing. It was stated in the first chapter that Heidegger had a special respect and fascination for the early Greek or pre-Socratic philosophers (Heraclitus, Parmenides, Anaximander), because they possessed the keen ability to foster and maintain an attuned correspondence with Being. Subsequent philosophers, beginning with Plato and Aristotle, became practitioners of metaphysics and lost this pristine and incisive ability, which resulted in altering the course of Western philosophy from its genuine mission – the Seinsfrage. But Heidegger came along to announce the “end” of philosophy and a concomitant need to “overcome” metaphysics with the hope of again allowing the meaning of Being to be conveyed to philosophers receptive to Being’s promptings, thus recapturing the privileged philosophical style of the pre-Socratics.

In a similar vein, the very early Heidegger is found in the “IPR” course desirous of gaining access to Christianity in its most pristine and incisive expression, since it too has undergone serious sullying and compromise by: “Aristotelian and Neoplatonic conceptuality of both Catholic and mainstream Protestant theology [that] amounted to a
foreign infiltration of and distortion of the concrete historicity of the primal Christianity of the New Testament. In an attempt to retrieve the true essence of this primal experience, Heidegger is thus seen returning to the very earliest Christian documents, to Paul’s two letters to the Thessalonians. Caputo remarks that Heidegger: “set out to explore a radical Christian ‘dawn’ (eine Frühe) before it had vanished in the harsh light of Greek philosophical theology.” This has a definite parallel with the later Heideggerian recommendation to return to the earliest texts of Greek philosophy found in pre-Socratic thinking, to a radical Greek dawn before it vanished under the harsh light of metaphysics. In either instance, there is in Heidegger a “love or privileging of the early,” according to Caputo.

If time and space permitted it could be shown in this chapter that Heidegger’s fixation on Paul’s correspondence to the neglect of the Gospels meant that his notion of primal Christian experience was severely impoverished. However, it is more manageable and important at this point to discern the positive aspects that this particular “love and privileging” of the earliest Christian documents reveals about the primitive Christian experience.

Focusing on the early as means to uncover the full meaning content of an experience is not the work of a romantic luddite seeking asylum in the idyllic past, but rather it is better seen as the work of the phenomenologist getting “to the matter itself” (“zu den Sachen selbst”). Therefore, it is important when grappling with this early phase of Heidegger’s career not to lose sight of the major impact of phenomenology and Husserl. Accordingly, as the close analysis of the “IPR” course ensues, there will be a concerted effort to investigate and incorporate the extent and meaning of this impact.
Herbert Spiegelberger notes that any vacillations toward phenomenology on Heidegger’s part is due mainly to the fact that, “The history of Heidegger’s association with phenomenology is almost entirely that of his association with Edmund Husserl.”

And this period when Heidegger is delivering lectures for religion courses can easily be recognized as the high mark in that relationship. Evidence of the mutual respect and affinity that prevailed between Husserl and Heidegger at this time comes forth in the way that each philosopher pays tribute to the other. Husserl would often say to Heidegger, “You and I are phenomenology,” while Heidegger in discussing the seminal figures in his philosophical quest accords Husserl the lofty stature as the thinker who “opened my eyes.”

Indeed what Husserl did to open up Heidegger’s eyes was to provide a phenomenological lens that refracted light which illuminated the way to return to the origins of experience. Phenomenology aims to think “the matters themselves,” and even more emphatically to encounter them in their presuppositionless originality. According to Robert Sokolowski, “The most important contribution phenomenology has made to culture and the intellectual life is to have validated the truth of prephilosophical life, experience, and thinking.” So it was not Heidegger, the hopeless romantic, who loved and privileged the “early,” rather it was Heidegger the phenomenologist who saw the early as having special disclosive potential. Therefore, Heidegger applies the rigors of the phenomenological method to “religion,” specifically to two of Paul’s letters in order to expose the depths of primal Christianity – Urchristentum.

Besides fostering a general appreciation for the place of phenomenology in Heidegger’s thinking, the preceding discussion of phenomenology also helps to
underscore an emphasis that bears periodic reiteration; namely, that Heidegger was and remained a philosopher, not a theologian. This reminder assumes a particular urgency at this point of delving into an early Freiburg course that has an overt religious content. Kisiel concurs with this cautionary reminder as he begins discussing a portion of Heidegger’s “IPR” course:

Methodologically, this [the second part of the course] does not aim to be a dogmatic or theological interpretation, nor an interpretation based on the history of religions, nor a religious meditation, but a phenomenological interpretation. The peculiarity of such an interpretation is the attempt to arrive at a preunderstanding as an original way of access to the Christian lifeworld of the New Testament.

In an even more comprehensive way, Kisiel warns elsewhere that any true evaluation of the impact that this course had upon Heidegger’s thinking must be leveled from within a philosophical context only: “the real contribution of this academic year [1920-21] to Heidegger’s development is not…religious content but rather the abstrusely formal elaboration of his hermeneutic phenomenology.”

In a certain sense Heidegger himself admits that the true motivations and intentions behind his “IPR” course are more philosophical than theological. While the course strives to penetrate the religious lifeworld of the first Christian communities and thus to find a more adequate conceptuality for it with the help of Husserl’s phenomenology, Heidegger acknowledges that there have been others before him with more decidedly religious interests and motivations who have already discovered the primal Christian experience and its importance without the assistance of phenomenology per se. Theologian and Heidegger translator John Macquarrie bolsters and broadens Heidegger’s insight that the phenomenological method was influential in the work of many theologians, though in a very inchoate way:
Although the term [phenomenology] is chiefly associated with Husserl and the difficult philosophical method which he constructed, there were thinkers both before Husserl and contemporary with him, and especially philosophers of religion, whose methods were to all intents and purposes phenomenological, even if they did not call them such and were not acquainted with Husserl directly or conversant with the niceties of his method.\textsuperscript{36}

The theologian who best exemplified a “proto-phenomenology” with the specific agenda to investigate the depths of the early Christian experience was Friedrich Schleiermacher. This conclusion can be extracted from sources predating the 1920-21 “IPR” course. Concentrating on the problem of the religious in Schleiermacher’s \textit{Discourses on Religion}, Heidegger gave a private lecture on August 2, 1917.\textsuperscript{37} The second portion of this work by Schleiermacher, “On the Essence of Religion,” is for Heidegger a prime example of a proto-phenomenology of religion leading back to the primal Christian experience, because it expresses a pre-philosophical or “antimetaphysical regress to a feeling of absolute dependence.”\textsuperscript{38}

Heinrich Ochsner, an early associate of Heidegger’s, was among the select few in attendance at this talk and recounts the rationale upon which Heidegger based his conviction that the work of Schleiermacher, unknowingly yet wholeheartedly, embraced an informal phenomenological method in order to arrive at the essence of religious experience in general and Christian religious experience specifically:

Schleiermacher distinguishes religion sharply from metaphysics and morals, as well as from theological doctrine; he argues that religion is based autonomously in the immediate intuition of the historical manifestation of the infinite in the unique particularities of the world and, more specifically, in the personal self-consciousness of the ‘feeling of dependence’ on the infinite. Religion’s essence is neither thinking nor acting, but intuition and feeling.\textsuperscript{39}

While it will be shown shortly that Heidegger would not agree with Schleiermacher as to the precise nature of the early Christian religious experience as including a thoroughgoing feeling of absolute dependence on the infinite, he nevertheless commends
Schleiermacher’s proto-phenomenological attitude which in turn enabled a crude phenomenological “reduction” away from metaphysics, morals and theological doctrines, and back to the more genuine and original religious experience of early Christianity.

Trying to determine with exactness the extent to which the proto-phenomenology of Schleiermacher’s use of reduction accords with the formal doctrine of phenomenological/transcendental reduction pioneered by Husserl in 1907 would move this study well beyond its parameters, mostly because this would entail a lengthy analysis of the different kinds of reductions and their varied applications in phenomenological theory. However it is still important to realize that Heidegger regards Schleiermacher’s assertions as a prescient form of phenomenological reduction, since an operative “bracketing” can be observed whereby all of the established ways used to articulate religious experience through metaphysics, morality, and doctrine are “suspended” in order to be led back to Christian religious experience in its own original domain and peculiar character.

Reduction, with the Latin root *re-ducere*, is indeed a leading back, a withholding or a withdrawal. When introducing and developing the concept of reduction, Husserl himself often refers to a first procedure of bracketing or *epoché*. According to Kisiel, Heidegger sees Schleiermacher’s efforts “as a form of *epoché* which serves to ‘switch off’ and so sort out the various ‘teleologies’ [external trappings] normally operative in and with religion.” Schleiermacher, the proto-phenomenologist, deploys a crude form of the *epoché* and successfully switches off and sorts out the external trappings of religion based on prejudicial ways of thinking metaphysically and doctrinally or acting morally in order to arrive at the true essence of religion based on immediate intuition or
feeling of the infinite. This, as a result, engenders an awareness of dependence (“absolute
dependence”) and a yearning (“a sense and taste for the infinite”).

The other early source, aside from this 1917 invitation only talk, for discovering
Heidegger’s positive evaluation of Schleiermacher’s theology as proto-phenomenological
is in the second course he taught during the early Freiburg days in the summer semester
of 1919. Here, Heidegger does not further explain why Schleiermacher should be seen as
a forerunner of the phenomenological movement, but instead presumes this in order to
note a resulting worthy contribution made by Schleiermacher. Because Schleiermacher
used a rough form of the phenomenological reduction so as to be led back to religion’s
utmost primal religious experience – intuition and feeling – it is fitting to declare that, “he
discovered primal Christianity” (“er entdeckte das Urchristentum”).45 After making this
broad declaration, Heidegger goes on to elaborate that such a discovery was a far
reaching contribution because of the decisive way it influenced Hegel’s youthful works
on the history of religion and indirectly influenced Hegel’s entire philosophical system,
which in turn shaped the ideas of the German intellectual movement in general.46

It should be clear from the foregoing that while Heidegger will be seen
conducting an interesting analysis of the primal Christian experience in the “IPR” course,
he lays no claim to original thinking on many levels. At one level, Heidegger credits
Schleiermacher for having “discovered” the importance of the primal Christian religious
experience, and having done so with the aid of a methodology that would not have its
formal debut until a century later with Husserl and the phenomenological movement.
Incidentally, it is a curious irony that the determination of the proper relationship between
matters religious and phenomenology per se was actually a task being reserved for
Heidegger. Moran has observed that, “Husserl’s initial allotted role for Heidegger in the
great domain of phenomenology was as someone who would develop a phenomenology
of religion…”

But even at another level, when it comes to trying to decipher the more specific
content of the primal Christian experience, there is an additional disclaimer issued by
Heidegger that he is merely borrowing the insights of his intellectual predecessors. It is
interesting to note a similarity here concerning the unusual and disjointed sense of timing
Heidegger demonstrated when deciding to properly cite his sources. When it comes to
acknowledging the person responsible for discovering the importance of primal
Christianity, Heidegger did so prior to the course in which it is thoroughly discussed.
Likewise, he does not devote any lecture time to acknowledging the sources responsible
for detailing the content of primal Christianity, but instead postpones such recognition
until decades later in 1970 when he writes a Foreword to the published edition of his
1927/28 lecture “Phenomenology and Theology.” As Heidegger was seen crediting
Schleiermacher, a theologian, for discovering primal Christianity, he once again credits
another theologian, Franz Overbeck (1837-1905), for more specifically identifying the
content of this experience.

A friend and contemporary of Friedrich Nietzsche, Overbeck’s work was clearly
influenced by the master hermeneut of suspicion. Overbeck was interested in finding
the content of primal Christianity, and like Nietzsche he was suspicious of movements
claiming to represent the original Christian ideal. However unlike Nietzsche, Overbeck
never denounced belief per se, but instead elevated a particular belief of the early
Christians as paramount for discerning the very kernel of the primal Christian experience.
According to Overbeck, it was the fervent belief of the nearness of the eschaton which truly vivified the religious experience of the first Christians. Nearly fifty years after devoting almost undivided attention to this reality in his first religion course Heidegger lauds Overbeck for such an important insight: “the ‘little book’ On the Christianness of Today’s Theology of Franz Overbeck…established the world-denying expectation of the end as the basic characteristic of what is primordially Christian” (von Franz Overbeck, der die weltverneinende Enderwartung als den Grundzug des Urchristlichen feststellt).49

Because Overbeck admired the essential aspect of the original Christian belief as the world-denying expectation of the end of the present mode of the world and of the imminent coming of Christ, he felt that the eventual erosion of a heightened belief in the Parousia set the ground for rigid dogmatization and the decline of the spirit.50 The wearing away and neutralizing of this particular belief was hastened by the accommodating tendencies of formal theology, beginning with early Patristic times, to be relevant to its surrounding culture. Specifically, Overbeck felt that the chronic attempts by theology to convert faith to knowledge, according to prevalent philosophical or cultural standards, was fatal to the genuine meaning of the Christian religion, and especially to the original Christian experience and its intensely eschatological focus.51

With a firm realization that Heidegger was not the first person to call attention to the reality of the primal Christian religious experience, nor the first to specify the content of this experience, it still remains to be shown that he nonetheless made a unique contribution toward the refinement of this reality in the “IPR” course. What did Heidegger have to offer about the primal Christian experience and how did this early theological preoccupation influence the development of his thinking? Attempting to
address these two questions and related concerns will be the main objective in the following pages.

*The Human Experience of Factual Life: Part One – “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion”*

Earlier a schematic outline of Heidegger’s “IPR” course was presented in Appendix-1 as a preliminary way to introduce and call attention to the important role that the topic of primal Christianity would assume during the winter semester of 1920-21. To attempt a complete analysis of the entire course with its two main divisions would be an unmanageable and ineffective pursuit for the interests of the present chapter. As a result, a very purposeful selectivity will be exercised in order to hone in on the portions of the course that will maximize an understanding of how Heidegger’s specific early theological interests gave rise to some later aspects of his thinking and continued to guide it often times in subtle and unexpected ways. The pertinent portion of the course that goes to the heart of these matters is contained in Part Two, where Paul’s letters to the Galatians and Thessalonians serve as the textual bases for illuminating the main concept of primal Christianity in conjunction with the two ancillary concepts of factual life-experience and primordial temporality. To delineate even further this exercise of meaningful selectivity, the following will focus only upon the manner in which 1 Thessalonians 4-5 acted as the ultimate point of convergence whereby primal Christian experience is best understood when integrated with its corollaries of facticity and temporality.

Having established that Heidegger embraces the basic content of primal Christianity originally advanced by Overbeck as the first Christian communities’ heightened expectations for a Parousia close at hand, it becomes clear that any real
potential for novelty will come from appreciating Heidegger’s perception that the early Christian preoccupation with Jesus’ Second Coming exerted a tremendous influence on their understanding of human existence as factically lived with a unique awareness of and sensibility to time.

While factical life as a concept signifying concrete, historical existence is a term Heidegger co-opted from the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey, it was seen in the first chapter that Heidegger had a penchant for accusing Western philosophy of “forgetting” the richness behind many of its established concepts and then issuing a necessary call to recover that which has been forgotten or neglected. Thus in Part One of the “IPR” course, Heidegger sets out to explicate the phenomenon of factical life-experience with typical Heideggerian rhetoric that if philosophy makes a conscious effort to inquire about the problematic nature of any of its concepts, then strides will be made in retrieving their deeper yet lost meaning. But it is not just a matter of indiscriminately raising a concept like facticity to the level of problem and then automatically arriving at new or renewed points of clarity; instead, there must also be recourse to a source or sources which always possessed an uncompromised and pristine appreciation of the concept.

It was the first Christian communities who possessed such a genuine grasp of facticity, and so by turning to Paul’s Galatians and Thessalonians, as Heidegger so guided his students, philosophy’s understanding of factical life-experience would be moved forward. Thomas Sheehan, one of the few scholars who initially had access to the unpublished manuscripts of the “IPR” course lectures, weighs in with the following observation:

Part One of the course introduces a phenomenology dedicated to recovering what was forgotten by the entire Western tradition (including Husserl), but which, even if unthetically, was understood
This focusing of attention on Part One of the course may seem contradictory, since it was emphatically stated earlier that certain constraints would mean that only a very confined section of Part Two could receive a thorough treatment. However, it is impossible to make a quick and direct move into Part Two without jeopardizing the overall intellectual flow and integrity of the course. Therefore a few essential points that Heidegger raises in Part One must be addressed as prefatory remarks, which will only enhance the eventual treatment of the more relevant topics in Part Two.

Because several of the Freiburg courses immediately preceding the “IPR” course were topically oriented to the matter and method of phenomenology, it would be a fair assessment that Part One would continue in a similar vein but with a new and specialized focus. However what actually emerges in Part One of the course is an attempt to discern how the phenomenon of factical life-experience prescribes the need for a modified phenomenological method. So for some reason facticity vis-à-vis religion gives rise to a moment of pause in what would otherwise be a continuation of Heidegger’s phenomenological tours de force.

The need to halt and revise the phenomenological method to better suit the explication of factical life-experience (and even more specifically religious factical life-experience) in Part One of the “IPR” course has been even seen as a sign of Heidegger’s conflictedness toward the phenomenological movement. On one hand, as mentioned above, this early Freiburg period represents a high mark in the relationship between Heidegger and Husserl, and so can readily be dubbed the “golden age” of Heidegger’s unabashed promotion of and loyalty to phenomenology. To that end, Heidegger sets out
on his task to render a phenomenological analysis of factical life-experience with a sense of respect for his mentor’s largesse. According to Caputo, “Instead of Nietzsche’s flight from university philosophy, Heidegger puts his hope for renewal in a university that philosophizes and in particular in Freiburg, where Husserl’s phenomenology gives…access to the structure of factical life.”

On the other hand, Heidegger also begins to show signs of a maturing thinker – teetering towards a rebelling thinker – who realizes that a few modifications to the orthodox phenomenological method may be in order if it is to effectively investigate factical life-experience and its more specific expression in early Christianity. The problem in all phenomenology is always the question of access to the phenomenon – How does the philosopher get the phenomenon properly in view? For Heidegger, to properly get the phenomenon of factical life-experience in view, there will have to be an augmentation made to Husserl’s methodology. Therefore, Heidegger feels the need to expand the phenomenological method in ways beyond which Husserl at that point in time would allow in order to reach factical life-experience in its fullness. As Sheehan’s observation just pointed out, it was not Western philosophy in some generic sense which “forgot” factical life-experience in its authenticity, but rather Husserl himself can be singled out for having had an essential complicity.

Heidegger’s rationale for why Husserl is worthy of such a notorious implication has its basis in the way that Heidegger adds on to Dilthey’s definition of factical life, which in turn calls for a methodology divergent from Husserl’s:

Because factic life experience is more than a cognitive experience, more than even the simple initial experience of taking cognizance, philosophy [phenomenology] in the face of it must undergo a total transformation. What is had, lived, experienced in factic life is more
By stating that factual life experience is “more than” a cognitive experience, it is not as if Heidegger is implying that Husserl’s method is inadequate because it is relegated to the analysis of enclosed internal mental states. On the contrary, Heidegger would have been thoroughly conversant with one of phenomenology’s core tenets – the intentionality of consciousness – which according to Sokolowski is “the teaching that every act of consciousness we perform, every [factual] experience we have, is intentional: it is essentially ‘conscious of’ or an ‘experience of’ something or other.” Husserl was leading an all out campaign against the dominating philosophy launched by René Descartes which established and enshrined the subject-object dichotomy with such assertions that when humans are conscious, they are primarily aware of themselves or their own ideas, again Sokolowski: “Consciousness is taken to be like a bubble or an enclosed cabinet; the mind comes in a box. Impressions and concepts occur in this enclosed space, in this circle of ideas and experiences, and our awareness is directed toward them, not directly toward the things ‘outside.’” Therefore, one of Husserlian phenomenology’s important contributions was its doctrine of the intentionality of consciousness, which formidably challenged the entrenched egocentric predicament espoused by the Cartesian doctrine – How can we transcend ourselves and make contact with the external world?

So it would be utterly absurd to conjecture that Heidegger was faulting Husserl’s method on the very grounds against which Husserl was so assiduously fighting. Rather, when Heidegger posits a definition of factual life-experience that includes much more
than cognition, he is finding fault with Husserl’s phenomenology at a more sophisticated level.

In his earlier writings from 1907 to 1913, Husserl gradually developed his theory about the nature of the intentionality of consciousness. In order to leave a conceptual mark of distinction against the regnant Cartesian tradition, he introduced a new terminology drawing on the ancient Greek terms for “what is thought,” *noema*, and the “act of thinking,” *noesis*. While a thorough explanation of these terms is beyond the scope of this exposition, it is still helpful at present for the terms to be introduced and briefly explained.

*Noema* refers to any object of intentionality, to whatever is intended when human consciousness is focused on things, situations, facts, and any other kinds of objects. By contrast, *noesis* pertains to the intentional acts by which human consciousness intends things through perceptions, judgings, rememberings, etc. The main point to bear in mind is that for Husserl the *noema* and *noesis* are related components in the structure of the mental process. And this becomes the ground for Heidegger’s uneasiness as to whether or not the Husserlian method can provide the best access to factual life-experience. Not that the *noematic-noetic* interplay as an entrapped mental process would somehow thwart the abilities of the intentionality of consciousness to effectively reach an object like factual life-experience, but rather for Heidegger such an approach to factual life with its heavy reliance on the workings of the mental processes tends to shield and even “sanitize” the approach to factual life-experience and its full range of existential concerns.
Caputo has well identified some of Heidegger’s misgivings toward pure phenomenology’s ability to truly confront factual life in all its profundities. Husserl would contend that factual life-experience would be, as any other object of experience, a suitable target for philosophical reflection, since with ease the intentionality of consciousness would put the philosopher in touch with this pure intuition of simple and unencumbered givenness. But Caputo sees Heidegger raising doubt here about the status of factual life-experience—Is it just a “vorhanden,” a simply given, immutable object which is immediately evident? Heidegger would answer with a resounding “no,” and thus be fully consistent with his descriptions of factual life indicated earlier as being “more than a cognitive experience” which finds its fullest expression “in what I do and suffer…in…my states of depression and elevation.” Therefore, if the experience of factual life is best understood as an ongoing attempt to actively integrate new challenges and joys, then a phenomenological method is required that can effectively operate within this atmosphere that Heidegger likened to a “struggle” or “battle” (der Kampf).

In contrast, Husserl felt that the philosopher could carry out her mission in a much more tranquil climate with reflective disengagement from and neutralization of factual life. Because factual life-experience is a pure intuition and an unencumbered givenness, it would be readily accessed by the intentionality of consciousness and its noematic-noetic dynamic, thus neutralizing any trace of disturbance or agitation. However as Caputo suggests, “In the place of Husserlian peace, of calm correlation of noesis and noema, of intuition and presence, Heidegger puts the stormy battle between questioning and self-recessive life. The scene of intentionality is a Kampf.” Phenomenology is therefore put to the test on the score of factual life-experience.
Because life cannot be seen as merely an immediate cognitive intuition which only lends itself to a cool, clinical and clean cerebral study, then a modified phenomenological method is required that will be more adept at truly engaging the defining elements of strife and struggle present in the human condition.

It is hoped that the above objective to show how Heidegger boldly flexed his muscle of difference against Husserl and Armistice era phenomenology has been successfully met. However before proceeding to discuss the particular struggle that Heidegger’s feels beset the experience of factical life in early Christianity, it would be prudent to stave off any possible misunderstandings that may have arisen concerning 1920s Husserlian phenomenology. By restricting the discussion to such a small phase of Husserl’s career, it is understandable that any realistic hope of arriving at a comprehensive grasp of his philosophy is dashed. This is especially true with regard to Husserl’s approach to the experience of factical life with which Heidegger took particular issue as being too relegated to the coziness of cogitation.

However a closer look at Husserl’s development shows that his career can be tracked by three main stages, the latest of which being most relevant as intimated by its very designation as the “Lebenswelt” period. Since the most conspicuous and seminal motif preoccupying the senior Husserl was the basic lifeworld (Lebenswelt), it is only fitting that the issue of factical life-experience would assume a more prominent role in furthering the understanding of this world as experienced by a living subject in her particular perspective, no matter how distorted. Interestingly enough, Moran goes so far as to conjecture that Husserl’s contact with Heidegger may have been instrumental in determining the form and focus of his final work on the Lebenswelt:
After his retirement in 1928, partly in response to what he regarded as the mistaken direction of Heidegger’s phenomenology of concrete, historical existence in *Being and Time*, Husserl began to offer his own version of the themes of historicity and the finitude of human understanding and began to emphasize the manner in which the human consciousness is always caught within the context of the “lifeworld” (*Lebenswelt*).\(^7\)

Determining the accuracy of Moran’s speculation that the student (Heidegger) may have eventually influenced the master (Husserl) with regard to the issue of factual life-experience long after an estrangement between them had set in is not as important as coming to terms with the fact that much earlier the student was willing to courageously challenge the master on the issue of factual life-experience. What was it about the experience of factual life, so distinctively expressed within the earliest Christian communities, that made Heidegger take notice and take a stand to the point of endangering a relationship that was then at its peak?

*The Early Christian Experience of Factual Life as “Temporalized Struggle”*

*Part Two – “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion”*

Trying to arrive at an answer to the preceding question moves the study along directional lines that basically correspond with the thematic flow of Heidegger’s “IPR” course, (cf. Appendix-1). Part One intended to define broadly the experience of factual life and then assess its compatibility with state of the art phenomenology. The level of compatibility was soon discovered to be discordant, since the experience of factual life included the very real and dynamic quality of human struggle which would not fit neatly into the purview of the pure phenomenological method, confined as it was in a major way to the parameters of cognitional activity. Therefore in Part Two of the “IPR” course, Heidegger sets out to present a revised phenomenology that will adequately and thoroughly expose the existential depths of struggle as it is lived out in the fledgling
Pauline Christian communities of Galatia and Thessalonica. Even though Heidegger devotes labor toward interpreting both of Paul’s correspondences to the Galatians and the Thessalonians, it will be beneficial for the present endeavor to restrict its focus to his analysis of 1 Thessalonians. Heidegger himself only briefly treats the letter to the Galatians and in part endorses the course of action chosen here to dwell mainly on the Thessalonian correspondence, since it provides a privileged access to the vagaries of Christian factual life-experience in comparison to the letter to the Galatians: “Burdened with less dogmatic content than the letter to the Galatians, the two letters to the Thessalonians will be the focus of our attempts to explicate and understand the Pauline proclamation in the actual situation out of which it emerges.”

Earnestly attempting to capture the “actual situation” has definite phenomenological resonances. But as a phenomenological phenomenon, “situation” is only accessible through, and can only be elaborated out of a performed or enacted understanding (vollzugsässiges Verstehen). Heidegger’s emphasis concerning the importance of the performative or enactment sense as being determinative for truly grasping the context of early Christian experience was first indicated by Pöggeler after one of his exclusive pre-publication explorations into the manuscripts of the “IPR” course: “According to Heidegger, the primordial Christian experience is a factual and historical one, an experience of life in its actuality, because it sees life’s dominant structures in the significance of performance rather than in the significance of contents.”

This observation is extremely helpful for the structural integrity of this chapter because of its keen ability to simultaneously convey continuity and specificity.
Continuity is evident with Heidegger’s earlier general treatment of factual life-experience in Part One of the “IPR” course, when it was his conviction that such experience is realized in what one “does” and “suffers.” Now, as the Christian experience of factual life is being specifically broached, it is once again detectable that doing, performing, accomplishing – all forms of enactment – are integral to a genuine appreciation of the specific religious situation which provides the venue for Paul’s missives to the Thessalonians. Finally, continuity and specificity will coalesce later in the chapter when Heidegger characterizes the anticipatory experience accompanying the future Parousia as a proactive and engaged waiting.

However, in acknowledging the essential position that doing, performing, and accomplishing (Leisten) occupy in both factual life-experience in general as well as the more particular articulation found in early Christian existence, it is important not to overlook yet another key aspect of similarity – struggle (der Kampf). In fact, it can be recalled that Heidegger’s desire to incorporate the element of struggle into any genuine study of the experience of factual life in general signaled a necessary break with official phenomenology. Likewise in the realm of a Christian expression of factual life-experience, there is an utmost need to qualify all doing, performing, and accomplishing with the certain presence of real human struggle in all its many manifestations. As a result, Heidegger is seen in the second part of the “IPR” course dedicating a great deal of effort toward identifying and developing the precise struggle that confronted the Thessalonians and thus strongly influenced the form of expression that their factual life-experience took.
To do this Heidegger not only modifies the dictates of established phenomenology, but also fine tunes its scope to create a phenomenology of religion with the goal of achieving a phenomenological understanding of original Christian lived experience from out of itself.\textsuperscript{76} The fact that struggle is the prominent experiential base out of which early Thessalonian Christianity is lived is indicated by the position that the following assertion has toward the end of the course, which permits it to act as part of the concluding remarks: “The life of the Christian is enormously difficult, always actualized in need and affliction.”\textsuperscript{77}

Actualizing the Christian factical life-experience in the throes of need and affliction is not for Heidegger realized in some generic or unspecified manner, but rather is always a temporalized realization. In other words, as van Buren has so succinctly remarked, the experience of factical life lived by Paul’s Thessalonians was a \textit{daily} doing and suffering – a “timed” enacted struggle: “The original Christians live in a constant, essential, and necessary insecurity...a context of enacting one’s life in uncertainty before the unseen God, ‘in daily doing and suffering.’”\textsuperscript{78} Heidegger himself says at one point in his discussion of 1 Thessalonians that “Christian religiosity lives temporality as such” (“\textit{die christliche Religiosität lebt die Zeitlichkeit}”).\textsuperscript{79} Therefore, the factical sense of life for the struggling Thessalonians is shot through, from beginning to end, with time and temporality.\textsuperscript{80}

Heidegger’s strong conviction that the challenges of early Christian factical life-experience are ultimately realized in and affected by a temporal dimension should come as no surprise. It should rather be seen as a logical instance in the trajectory of his philosophical development, since the concepts of time and temporality maintain a
sustained place of prominence beginning with his phenomenological roots, surfacing with unmistakable force in *Being and Time*, and even extending into his later works.

From its inception, phenomenology has striven to develop a highly sophisticated theory of time and temporal experience. Of particular interest has been the discernment of the important role that temporality plays in the establishment of personal identity.\(^8\) As a matter of fact Husserl maintained that “Time is the universal form of all egological genesis,” an important point brought to light by Moran.\(^2\)

Heidegger clearly assumes the mantle of his phenomenological heritage on the score of temporality and personal identity in *Being and Time*. At key junctures here, Heidegger reminds his readers that the ultimate quest is the meaning of Being in general,\(^3\) even though both Divisions clearly display an extensive phenomenological analysis of *Dasein* – the being of humans or the entity (person) who has this being.\(^4\) With no intent to oversimplify the complicated analysis of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*, it is nonetheless important at this point to draw once again upon the acumen of Heidegger interpreter John Macquarrie. He claims that the entire picture painted by Heidegger in *Being and Time* brings into sharp relief the essentially temporal character of *Dasein*.\(^5\) For example at the end of the first Division of the work, Heidegger sums up the being of *Dasein* with the inclusive concept of care (*die Sorge*). The threefold structure of care developed in the previous sections, however, shows the marked importance of temporality in its various dimensions as Macquarrie’s summation shows:

\[
\text{[Care] comprises understanding, by which } Dasein \text{ projects itself into the future; it comprises also those moods or affective states which disclose to } Dasein \text{ the situation into which it finds itself already thrown as a result of past conditions; and finally it comprises fallenness, understood as } Dasein’s \text{ present lostness in the inauthenticity of the “they” and of routine existence.}\(^6\)
\]
Many are no doubt familiar with the temporal implications behind the *Sorge* principle in *Being and Time*, but lesser known is the fact that the roots of this emblematic principle stem from Heidegger’s early Freiburg period and his attendant engrossment with phenomenology, theology and factual life-experience. Caputo offers a credible reminder of this point with his belief that it was this phase of Heidegger’s career that first led him to the notion of *Sorge*, since everything in the early Freiburg lectures turns on the notion of factual life, which is a life of unending *Sorge* (care, trouble, worry, concern). Caputo bases this assertion, in part, on a loaded statement that Heidegger makes in a course from the winter semester of 1921-22, which immediately followed the course being studied. The very title of this course establishes its philosophical province (“Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research”); nevertheless, the condensed definition of life that he renders in a section devoted to the topic of care/*Sorge* has a clear New Testament echo: “In its broadest relational sense, to live is to care about one’s ‘daily bread.’”

Even though it must be conceded that this allusion to “daily bread” is more properly associated with the Synoptic as opposed to the Pauline New Testament tradition, and moreover that Heidegger’s recourse to this reference is a means to further his dialogue with Aristotle’s concept of *privatio* (the motivational principle behind the movement of all beings), it still clearly shows the pervasive and consistent influence of Heidegger’s early convictions regarding the experience of factual life as temporalized struggle, so poignantly and uniquely expressed in the lives of the first Christians. But something in particular captivated Heidegger about this expression that he saw as having the incisive capacity to integrate the dynamic of struggle so pressurized in the crucible of
temporality. It will not be some elusive mystery to discover the particular object of Heidegger’s fascination, since attention has already been directed to it, though in a different context. There it surfaced when discussing Heidegger’s indebtedness to Schleiermacher and Overbeck for their foundational work in acknowledging the importance of the primal Christian experience and detailing its core content. It can be recalled that according to Heidegger, it was “Franz Overbeck who established the world-denying expectations of the end as the basic characteristic of what is primordially Christian.”

In the second half of the “IPR” course, Heidegger is seen expanding upon Overbeck’s insight that the central aspect of original Christian experience is the expectation of Christ’s Second Coming or the Parousia: “The eschatological problem, in its deep nondogmatic sense is the very center of Christian life.” However Heidegger does not passingly concur with Overbeck in order to affirm his thesis concerning the importance of the Parousia and so pay him polite homage. Rather Heidegger seizes the wisdom from a trustworthy theological source in order to move his position to a new level that the early Christian experience of factical life is best understood and appreciated as temporalized struggle. Once this position is brought to its new height, Heidegger will ensure it remains there with firm footing by anchoring it to the event of the Parousia. It is, therefore, this event which becomes the focal and reference point by which the early Christian experience of factical life as temporalized struggle finds its definitive actualization and realization. And while the New Testament is filled with passages which warn that the return of the Lord will happen at the right time and without any warning, Heidegger believes, according to Sheehan, that Paul’s Thessalonian correspondence
offers the best interpretation of the event: “Christian eschatology revolutionized the concept of time, and...within Christianity itself St. Paul’s meaning of Parousia is unique...”

What was it that Heidegger perceived in Paul’s outreach to the Thessalonians about the matter of the Parousia that gave it such a radically unique character? In other words, why does Heidegger see Paul, and most specifically the pastoral Paul, making efforts to shore up the community he founded at Thessalonica, as best suited to depict the Second Coming as the event that encapsulates and vivifies the temporalized struggle of original Christian factical experience? Careful attention to the way that Heidegger views the nature of the relationship between Paul and the Thessalonians in the “IPR” course can be helpful as a first step in addressing these questions.

*The Pauline-Thessalonian Relationship: A Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity*

To give a certain indication of the status of this relationship, Kisiel employs the word “bond” when rendering his paraphrased translation of the course in light of Heidegger’s recourse to such passages as 1 Thes. 2:8: “So well disposed were we to you, in fact, that we wanted to share with you not only God’s tidings *but our very lives*, so dear had you become to us.” Thus, it is justifiable for Kisiel to call the relationship that Paul had with the Thessalonians a special bond when Heidegger states that Paul “himself became, and continues to be irrevocably linked to their lives [in a] bond which went beyond his ‘official’ relation to them as an apostle of Christ.”

From Heidegger’s perspective, then, it is crucial to appreciate the deep affinity that Paul has for the Thessalonians. Even more important, however, is the need to realize
that this affinity is predicated upon the mutual challenge that daily confronts both Paul and the Thessalonian church to live in anticipation of an imminent Parousia. Because Paul and the Thessalonians must strive to give witness to the Christian message under the constant expectation of a fast approaching Parousia, very pressing existential issues arise which forge a symbiotic relationship between the missionary and the missionized: “The bond is such that everything he [Paul] attributes to the community also says something about himself.”

Sheehan, one of the two oft-mentioned pioneers who made unprecedented excursions into the unpublished manuscripts of the “IPR” course, provides an important clue to what enables this relationship of vicarious concern for the Parousia. Because Heidegger’s interpretation of 1 Thessalonians is oriented in its broadest sense by linguistic concerns rather than philology or exegesis, the repetition of certain words takes on special hermeneutic significance. In this regard, Sheehan draws attention to Heidegger’s zeroing in on the various verb forms of *genesthai* (to have been/to have become) that are repeated time and again in 1 Thessalonians. This becomes important in trying to understand the basis for Paul’s intimate identification with the community at Thessalonica, since according to Sheehan, “*genesthai* in all its forms points to the basic state of being of St. Paul and of the Thessalonians, namely, their ‘already having become’ or ‘already having been’ (*Gewordensein*).” Heidegger expresses it in this way:

Paul experiences the Thessalonians in two ways: 1) he experiences their “having become” [followers of Christ]; 2) he experiences that they have a “knowledge” of their having-become. Moreover, their having-become is at once Paul’s, he is included in and affected by their having-become and its accompanying know-how (*D.h. ihr Gewordensein ist auch ein Gewordensein des Paulus. Und von ihrem Gewordensein wird Paulus mit betroffen*).
But if, as Sheehan maintains, *genesthai* in all its frequently occurring verbal forms points to the basic state of the relationship between Paul and the Thessalonians, it does so based on something more profound and dynamic about the expressions “having become” and “having been” than just their sheer recurrence in the biblical text. While Sheehan is correct in his assessment that Heidegger’s interpretation of 1 Thessalonians is more properly a linguistic rather than a philological or exegetical analysis, he nevertheless restricts the hermeneutical richness of this linguistic study to the repetition of words and phrases.

For Heidegger, however, the power of language is not strictly determined by the utter multiplication of words. Instead, language and words derive their real force from the close connection they have with Being! A standard later Heideggerian aphorism states this well in declaring that, “language is the house of Being, which is appropriated by Being and pervaded by Being. And so it is proper to think the essence of language from its correspondence to Being.”\(^{100}\) So the ultimate source for *genesthai*’s disclosive potential concerning the relationship of Paul and the Thessalonian church comes not merely from quantitative reiteration but rather from a qualitative connection to Being itself: “words and language are not wrappings in which things are packed for the commerce of those who write and speak. It is in words and language that things first come into being and are.”\(^{101}\)

While making this deeper connection to what gives an expression like *genesthai* its ultimate revelatory power may not have been suited to Sheehan’s project, it certainly has merit for the purposes of the current to continually show, at critical junctures, the continuity evident among the earlier and later phases of Heidegger’s career. Thus it is
observable that already in the 1920-21 religion course, Heidegger exhibits a preliminary fascination for the power of words to convey something telling about the basic state of being between Paul and the Thessalonians, which will appear in his later writings as a full blown preoccupation for the disclosive potential in language overall because of its very emanation from Being itself.

The “having-become/having-been” of the Thessalonians by which Paul experiences them, indeed has a disclosive force and dynamic quality since for Heidegger it “is not just a past and bygone event, but something that is constantly co-experienced by the Thessalonians, so that their having become is their present being.” Heidegger believes that the very essence of this becoming or genesis (“genesthai”) is reflected in 1 Thes. 1:6, “You, in turn, became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the word despite great trials, with the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit.” What is peculiar to the becoming of the Thessalonians is a receptivity to the good news being announced, which is accepted in great distress and tribulation.

However Heidegger makes a particular effort to underscore the pneumatic dimension in the assertion of 1 Thes. 1:6, which serves to greatly qualify the nature of this receptivity. Because this receptivity to the good news is not self-made or motivated out of the Thessalonians’ own experience but rather comes from the Holy Spirit, a joy is also awakened, as Heidegger explains: “The acceptance dechesthai consists in entering oneself into the anguish of life. A joy is bound up therewith, one which comes from the Holy Spirit and is incomprehensible to life.” Therefore, the ongoing receptivity that characterizes the becoming of the Thessalonians entails the full sweep of emotional expression from dread to joy.
Initially it might appear strange that the becoming of the Thessalonians – the ongoing progress they make in “having-become/having-been” followers of Christ through a receptivity to the gospel animated by the Holy Spirit – is one marked by such a wide range of emotions. After all when Paul uses the word gospel or good news in his letters to the churches, it is a very technical term meaning the message of salvation available in and through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This would more typically evoke an affirmative emotional response like joy. However besides joy, the affective state of the Thessalonian is also characterized by a sense of dread and trepidation because of the environment of “affliction” under which they labor as they evolve in their Christian discipleship by continual receptivity to the gospel.

And it is the presence of these more negative emotions, indicative of some state of affliction, that points to the decisive way by which Paul’s intimate bond to the Thessalonians is established and sealed. Paul’s participation in the becoming and having been of the Thessalonians is based on the Parousia, since the “affliction” plaguing this early church is another technical term for the trials it experiences in the final stage of God’s plan – the eschatological period. Therefore, the degree to which the Thessalonians are able to be receptive to and so appropriate the reality of the Parousia into their Christian becoming will have a direct bearing on the authenticity of Paul’s own Christian becoming. “Paul’s life depends on their steadfastness in faith (Das Leben des Paulus hängt ab vom Feststehen der Thessalonicher im Glauben), which puts them even now before our Lord Jesus Christ in his coming. For you are our glory and joy.” (cf. 1 Thes. 2:19ff)
Thus, the nature of the relationship between the Thessalonians and Paul is not one of detached professionalism, whereby Paul, the “ambassador of Christ,” fulfilled his duties by founding a church in Thessalonica only to then move on to do the same in another region without ever making any personal investment. Any such thoughts of disinterested neutrality are quickly dashed in the first Thessalonian correspondence, where Paul not only expresses his fondness and affection by addressing the community as “brothers and sisters” fourteen times, but moreover admits of a dependency on his part to the extent that his very being and becoming a follower of Christ is contingent on the way that their discipleship is realized in light of the Parousia: “For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.” (1 Thes. 3:8)

While standing firm in the Lord could be exhibited in many behavioral and attitudinal patterns of the Thessalonians, it is specifically in their manner of enduring and holding out for the Parousia that for Heidegger most clearly establishes a direct link to the state of Paul’s own well-being. To endure and hold out for the Parousia is more a hopeful anticipation than a calculated waiting for it, and to the extent that the Thessalonians can endure and hold out in a spirit of hope, so too will Paul be able to live in hope. “It is in relation to the Parousia that the Thessalonians are Paul’s hope, glory, and joy.” Close attention to the tone of the original German, upon which Kisiel bases his paraphrase, reveals the depth of Paul’s dependency in which he is portrayed as “completely surrendering” himself to the destiny of the Thessalonians.

In concluding this discussion about the nature of the relationship between Paul and the Thessalonians, advanced as a first step in understanding Heidegger’s position that the treatment of the Parousia in 1 Thessalonians offers the best vantage point
for grasping the factual life-experience of primitive Christianity as temporalized struggle, it is important to see the connection that has been made between “having become/having been” and the future. Heidegger maintains that the thematic presence of *genesthai* throughout 1 Thessalonians is expressive of how Paul experiences the Thessalonians – their having become followers of Christ directly impinges upon his own having become a follower of Christ. However as the above has shown, Heidegger does not leave such a potentially abstract description of this contact unspecified, but rather contends that the mutually reciprocal Christian becoming of Paul and the Thessalonians is ultimately realized in the way that the Parousia is confronted. Van Buren offers an articulate synthesis of the development of Paul’s relationship to the Thessalonians when he says that “this present perfect ‘having-been’ is taken up into and shapes precisely the hopeful waiting toward the *Zukunft*, the future that comes toward one, which means here the Second Coming, the ‘thy kingdom come.’”

Before proceeding directly to the second step in the ongoing effort to address the question concerning Heidegger’s conviction that Paul’s treatment of the Parousia in the Thessalonian correspondence best articulates the vicissitudes of the early Christian experience of factual life as temporalized struggle, it will be beneficial to dwell on a further aspect of step one. It was just borne out in this step how the relationship Paul had with the young Thessalonian church was most telling for the place of the Parousia in their factual life-experience, since the manner in which they daily integrated this challenging future event not only defined their Christian faith, but moreover redounded to Paul’s own steadfastness in faith. What becomes intriguing at this point, then, is trying to determine what it was about Heidegger’s philosophical leanings at the time of the “IPR” course that
would encourage him to interpret the very relationship of Paul and the Thessalonians as an important means of access to the experience of factical life in primal Christianity. It is not just a matter acknowledging the reality of a relationship; but rather it is a relationship of important interdependence, whereby the way in which the Thessalonians become Christians in the face of the Parousia mutually conditions the way in which Paul becomes a Christian.

What was it that would lead Heidegger to believe that relationality could be vested with such power? Far from being a moot question, the attempt to find an answer fits well into the contours of the current project, since it is this chapter’s aim to show that certain key issues, which will prove to have a lasting place in Heidegger’s thought, surface during his early Freiburg period due to the strong influences of theology and phenomenology. The preceding discussion of Paul’s relationship to the Thessalonians, and the related discovery of the determinative effect that this relationship had upon Paul’s own discipleship, is a perfect instance where the dual influences of theology and phenomenology converge. The role of theology is more apparent, since all the preceding analysis which led to the conclusion regarding the importance of the relationship between Paul and the Thessalonians was occasioned by Heidegger’s “IPR” course steeped in theological concerns – the Parousia as the ultimate point of reference for the early Christian experience of factical life as timed struggle. More subtle, perhaps, but no less influential is the role of phenomenology for investing relationality with the very foundational force it was seen wielding in the interaction between Paul and the Thessalonians.
Granting phenomenology such a foundational role may initially appear to be misplaced, since a nodding acquaintance with the vocabulary and argumentation of phenomenology seems to give the impression that this is a form of philosophy that veers towards “solipsism,” whereby nothing exists outside of one’s own mind. In regards to phenomenology’s vocabulary, Sokolowski points out this possible prejudice: “With its talk about the transcendental ego, the temporal stream of consciousness, and the reduction, phenomenology may seem to neglect the existence and the presence of other persons and communities.” Moreover in regard to its line of argumentation, a complaint could be leveled that phenomenology “reduces” other persons to mere phenomena and thus makes the solitary ego the only reality. But, connected with all this focus on the ego are the related problems of the experience of other egos (alter egos) and the experience of the “foreign,” the “strange,” or the “other” (Fremderfahrung).

As Moran suggests, even if Husserl strongly concluded that all phenomenology really coincided with the phenomenology of the self-constitution of the ego, he can also be seen throughout his career as consistently “worried about the constitution of our intersubjective life.” Husserl claimed to have overcome the problems of solipsism as early as his Göttingen lectures of 1910-11 and can be seen later on making a bold claim about intersubjectivity in his 1931 Cartesian Meditations: “I even experience the reduced world of experiences as an intersubjective world.” Therefore, sweeping generalities charging that phenomenology overlooks the existence and presence of other persons and communities are unfounded. Spurred on by the very interests and vexations of its founder, phenomenology has had much to say about human community and has provided extensive descriptions of the experiences between and among minds and bodies.
Husserl’s initial treatment of intersubjectivity utilized the concept of “empathy” (die Einfühlung) with others as that which enables “[me] to read into another’s actions as an expression of inner states analogous to my own.”¹¹⁵ Though Husserl adopted the term empathy from psychologist Theodor Lipps and the Munich school of phenomenology only to give it his own emphasis, there was a certain uncomfortableness with the concept, since he was always concerned that it might convey the wrong connotations.

As a result, a full development of empathy along phenomenological lines would come from Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross), Husserl’s first Freiburg assistant. Stein not only wrote her dissertation on the problem of empathy, but also had a heavy hand in representing Husserl’s own thinking on empathy when she transcribed and edited the manuscripts that eventually became his Ideas II, where empathy is closely discussed.¹¹⁶ She can therefore be seen as providing a reliable guide to Husserl’s thinking on empathy, which according to her is “the source of our experiences of the other or ‘foreign’ (das Fremde).”¹¹⁷ The manner by which the other is reached empathically is through the self feeling itself into the other, with the self as the original reference point, Stein explains: “When I empathize I feel into the other, but I do not become one with the other.”¹¹⁸ Empathy is not just an emotive quality but also has a cognitive status, which for Stein is a “blind” or “empty” mode of knowledge that reaches the experience of the other without possessing it. Thus, there is no complete identification of the self with the other.¹¹⁹

While this is by no means a complete presentation of the phenomenological teaching on empathy developed by Husserl and his student Stein, and though they admit that empathy is a founded or non-originary experience, it should nonetheless be clear that
this theory shows signs of inadequacy for Heidegger, who believes that the relationship between Paul and the Thessalonians is one of complete identification allowing for each one’s level of eschatological witness to reciprocally affect the other’s. And so if Heidegger’s interest in the potency of relationality were mutually spawned by his phenomenological heritage and its related interests in intersubjectivity, there was also a certain point at which he felt the need to transcend the theory of empathy in order to guarantee that intersubjective relationality had unquestionable disclosive force because of the very constitution of human existence.

Although Heidegger is once again parting company with the phenomenological establishment of his day, he does so here in regard to empathy with a degree of finesse and diplomacy. Heidegger is certainly forthright in several places after the “IPR” course about his difficulties with the effectiveness of the widely accepted theory of empathy. Already in the 1925 History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena, a work that many feel can be read as a first draft of the master work Being and Time, Heidegger is seen blatantly rejecting the problem of empathy as an “absurd pseudo-problem.”

At the same time however, he is respectful of those who have preceded him and embraced the concept by clarifying that his rejection of empathy is not an out-and-out dismissal of the larger issue that it was attempting to address: “The rejection of this pseudo-problem of empathy…by no means implies that being-with-one-another (das Miteinandersein) and its comprehensibility does not stand in need of phenomenal clarification.”

Instead, for Heidegger empathy is simply not the best means to achieve this comprehension and clarification; and because of the very manner in which it proceeds, it only leads to more misguided conceptions that throw the entire grasp of
relationality into misinformed confusion. Thus in a work following *Being and Time*, Heidegger speaks even more forcefully:

> The term ‘empathy’ has provided a guiding thread for a whole range of fundamentally mistaken theories concerning man’s [sic] relationship to other human beings and to other beings in general, theories that we are only gradually beginning to overcome today (*die wir heute nur langsam überwinden*).121

In saying that there is a small scale “overcoming” taking place with regard to empathy and the subsequent wrongheaded theories it generated, there is an unmistakable echo here with an important part of the previous chapter, where it was developed that one of Heidegger’s distinct contributions to Western philosophy was his insistence that it must strive to “overcome” metaphysics on a grand scale in order to genuinely reapproach the question of the meaning of Being. Heidegger did not just sit back and issue such a grandiose edict, but as it can be recalled, he was actively engaged in the furtherance of this program by offering an in-depth novel analysis of what led to the enthronement of an anemic metaphysics and by indicating the promise waiting behind the “end of philosophy.”

Likewise, in respect to the more modest issue of “overcoming” empathy and its defective corollaries in order to better comprehend and clarify intersubjective relationality, Heidegger can once again lay claim to having had an integral role in bringing this about. Most notable on this score are Heidegger’s efforts in chapter four of Division One in *Being and Time*, where he continues his analysis of *Dasein* with the thematic hope that the more one understands *Dasein*, the more one begins to comprehend and think about Being itself. To that end Heidegger outlines his intentions for this when he says, “we shall be led to certain structures of *Dasein* which are equiprimordial with *Being-in-the-world*: *Being-with* and *Dasein-with* (*Mitsein und Mitdasein*).122 The
development of Being-with and *Dasein*-with that accordingly ensues in the chapter establishes them as the very conceptual basis for empathy’s undoing.

This analysis of Being-with and *Dasein*-with that will take place is a natural step in the ongoing existential analytic of *Dasein*. In the previous chapters of *Being and Time* leading up to chapter four’s delineation of Being-with and *Dasein*-with, Heidegger identifies and describes an essential quality or ontological structure of *Dasein* with the fundamental concept “Being-in-the-world” (*In-der-Welt-Sein*): “‘Being-in’ is thus the formal expression for the *Being of Dasein, which has Being-in-the-world as its essential state.’”¹²³ Therefore, *Dasein* is always in a world, and Heidegger talks of “Being-in-the-world” as the constitutive state of *Dasein*.

But in order to fully understand this determinative quality of *Dasein*’s being, any simplistic theories must be avoided which purport that for *Dasein* to be “in” the world means merely the ability for it to be fixed in a definite position by x-y coordinates. For as Macquarrie counsels, “Being-in-the-world is a ‘dwelling’ in the world, and ‘dwelling’ is a rich and complex relationship, far more than simply the spatial relationship of being located somewhere.”¹²⁴ Dwelling will be treated extensively in chapter three.

Expressive of the richness and complexity of *Dasein*’s dwelling in the world is the fact that the world is a common world (*Mitwelt*, “with-world”), in other words it is a world always shared with others: “the world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of *Dasein* is a *with-world* (*Mitwelt*). Being-in is *Being-with* Others.”¹²⁵ With this conclusion Heidegger’s stated goals at the start of chapter four have been successfully met. He set out to show that the other is as much of a fundamentally ontological structure of *Dasein* (“equiprimordial”) as the World was shown to be in
previous sections of *Being and Time*. A synonym for a fundamentally ontological structure of *Dasein* is an “existential.” “To-be-in-the-world,” as one existential of *Dasein*, showed that there is no subject without the world. Similarly, the “other” can now be deemed an existential, whereby there is no isolated “I” without the “other.” George Kovacs deftly integrates these two important interrelated principles of Heidegger’s phenomenology of *Dasein* when he states, “The ‘other’ is ontologically given with the ‘World’…”

Certainly these are principles of Heidegger’s brand of phenomenology that can distinguish him specifically from other phenomenologies espoused by Husserl and Stein on the subject of empathy. When it is recalled that Stein’s understanding of empathy was “projective” and more detached (“When I empathize I feel into the other, but I do not become one with the other.”), then it is easy to perceive Heidegger’s basis for divergence based on all that has just been advanced regarding the very ontological constitution of human existence – *Dasein*’s basic structure as Being-in-the-world and Being-with-others. According to Lawrence Hatab, Heidegger “finds the term *Einfühlung* regrettable and critiques the theory as phenomenologically inadequate because of its sense of empathy as a ‘bridge’ between a solitary subject that feels itself into the Other who is initially closed off.”

Hatab is able to formulate this observation based upon Heidegger’s very brief treatment of empathy in the closing sections of his development of Being-with and *Dasein*-with in chapter four of *Being and Time*. It is as if Heidegger feels the need to bring up empathy in this context not so much as to offer a close comparison and contrast analysis between it and Being-with, but rather to firmly establish the priority between
these two concepts that should be almost self-evident after his painstaking presentation of
Being-with’s constitutive prominence in the structural make-up of Dasein. “‘Empathy’
does not first constitute Being-with; only on the basis of Being-with does ‘empathy’
become possible.”129

With this poignant declaration of priority, a foundation is laid for Heidegger to
offer his alternative concept of empathy in a work subsequent to Being and Time. This
elaboration from 1929/30 will clearly show its inspirational roots from the second half of
the “IPR” course, where the firm conviction has been established that the relationship
between Paul and the Thessalonian church was so forcibly effective that the manner in
which the Thessalonians confronted the imminence of the Parousia mutually conditioned
and impacted upon the manner in which Paul was able to live out this primary feature of
eyearly Christian factual life-experience as timed struggle.

In The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude,
Heidegger expands upon the passing negative evaluation he made about empathy in
Being and Time. While not downplaying the certainty with which Heidegger rejects the
theoretical construction of empathy because of its tendency of polarization, as evidenced
by Heidegger clearly putting it in its proper place vis-à-vis Being-with, it is Hatab’s
suggestion, based on his own application of Heidegger to the field of ethics, that
Heidegger is prompting a “richer phenomenology of empathy.”130 As a result, Heidegger
offers the concept of Mitgang (“going-along-with”) as an enrichment to empathy and as a
specific manifestation for the otherwise broad based structure of Dasein as Being-with.
Not only is Dasein’s structural make-up indicated by an immediate and general Being-
with others, it is also a withness able to be specified by the deep ability to go-along-with
others, to somehow “transpose” oneself into others. For Heidegger then, there is a phenomenon in which people can intimately share one and the same comportment with one another – a *Mitgang*, a going-along-with:

Such going-along-with means directly learning how it is with this being, discovering what it is like to be this being *with* which we are going along *in this way*. Perhaps in doing so we may even see right into the nature of the other being more essentially and more incisively than that being could possibly do by itself.\(^{131}\)

At first it may be off-putting when Heidegger uses a nondescript term like “being” (*Seiendes*) to explain the dynamic meaning of going-along-with, since being conjures up images of “entities” or any actual being. However, once Heidegger’s overall intentions for this section of *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* are realized, then it is clear that the conceptual force of going-along-with for intersubjective reciprocity is not lessened by its alignment with “beings,” but in this context actually demonstrates its far-reaching potential. The general question being pursued by Heidegger here is whether or not the human person can “transpose” herself into another being that she herself is not. After applying this question first to animals, then to inanimate objects, he finally explores its relevance for other persons: “Can we as human beings transpose ourselves into another human being?” (“*Können wir – als Menschen – uns in einem anderen Menschen versetzen?*”)\(^{132}\)

So, far from seeing going-along-with as being compromised in its abilities to further specify what it broadly means that a basic state of *Dasein* is Being-with others, it actually retains its role as a compelling expression of the degree to which *Dasein* can be with other *Daseins*. Seen in this context, it is only fitting that prior to probing going-along-with’s significance for the relationality between and among humans that Heidegger would also find it potentially useful to elaborate on other general claims about the basic
ontological structure of *Dasein*, viz. the Being-in of *Dasein’s* Being-in-the-world. Therefore, if in *Being and Time* Heidegger broadly claims that the world that *Dasein* is “in” is a network of relations with a sundry of inanimate beings or “equipment” (*das Zeug*) and that *Dasein* is the unity of this interconnection of relations, then the explicit nature of this encounter brought forth in *The Fundamental Concept of Metaphysics* as a “transpositional” going-along-with can be seen as a welcome extrapolation.

But the extrapolation is most welcome as it pertains to nuancing the claim Heidegger makes in regard to the basic structure of *Dasein* as Being-with. To further specify Being-with as going-along-with shows Heidegger’s mature refinement of concepts that were initially cultivated by two primary influential forces from the earliest part of his career: theology and phenomenology. That he built upon his theological roots to eventually arrive at a concept like going-along-with is plain from all that was said above concerning the intimate relationship that obtained between Paul and the Thessalonian community. In striving to uncover the essence of the early Christian experience of factual life in the “IPR” course, Heidegger focuses on the Thessalonian correspondence where the imminence of the Parousia becomes emblematic of an existence overwhelmingly characterized as temporalized struggle. And while Paul writes to the Thessalonians from Corinth to reiterate the importance of continually incorporating this challenge into their Christianity, he does so not in a detached sense that his medium of correspondence might seem to convey. Rather as Heidegger notes, there is a special “bond” that exists between Paul and the Thessalonians, whereby each one’s ability to confront and integrate the Parousia mutually influences the other’s experience of Christian discipleship.
Because empathy is an important tenet of phenomenology, a discipline that had such a formative influence upon Heidegger, it would seem that he would wholeheartedly embrace it as the apt conceptual means to articulate the reciprocal force underlying the Pauline-Thessalonian relationship. However, as it was seen, Heidegger short circuits empathy’s ability (at least in its main line interpretations) to found relationality and so advances another concept. This not only supersedes empathy but also complements his broad based ontological assertion that the existence of Dasein is implacably structured as a Being-with others. Therefore, Heidegger’s introduction of going-along-with (Mitgang) to describe the capacity of intersubjective relationality is at once indicative of a continuation as well as a surpassing of his theological and phenomenological background. Going-along-with becomes the effective conceptual means to first articulate what Heidegger intimated about the relationship between Paul and the Thessalonians, and in the second place it is the corrective to empathy’s shortcomings.

A deeper appreciation is now possible for the early references to Heidegger’s use of 1 Thes. 3:8 to indicate the intersubjective reciprocity that exists between Paul and the church at Thessalonica in light of the Parousia close at hand: “we shall flourish only if you stand firm in the Lord!” This is clearly an example of what Heidegger would later express as going-along-with (Mitgang), the phenomenon in which people can “share one and the same comportment with one another.”\textsuperscript{133} That human beings can have such a “transpositional” relation with others means for Hatab that “there can be moments of spontaneous, direct, affective response wherein we are immersed in/there/with the other person.”\textsuperscript{134} It is evident that an affective response is most palpable between Paul and the Thessalonians in the face of the Parousia when Heidegger refers to 1 Thes. 2:19: “Who,
after all, if not you, will be our hope or joy, or the crown we exult in, before our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?”

Heidegger later indicates that the affective response that is able to be exchanged when people are in a transpositional relationship of going-along-with will actually be heightened by the awareness that there is the possibility of a deep sense of mutual involvement: “And do we not experience a new sense of elation in our Dasein each time we accomplish such going-along-with in some essential relationship with other human beings?” To read this back into the factual life-experience of Paul and the Thessalonians, it is apparent that the joy that can be shared between them relative to the Parousia can be positively influenced or increased when there is a conscious recognition that their strong relationship is the very conduit for the affective experience. Conversely, Heidegger also discusses the fact that feelings at the other end of the spectrum, such as anxiety and dread, will also be intensified when there is only minimal, or worse yet, no relational accord: “And yet how often we feel burdened by our inability to go along with the other.” To retrofit this into the mutual challenge of the Parousia vexing both Paul and the Thessalonians means that the anxiety and dread associated with the meaning of the Parousia would only be exacerbated by any evidence of alienation in the relationship.

In sum, Heidegger would expand the old bromide that “misery loves company” in two ways. First, misery as well as glee love company; and second they require company for their full affective response to not only be mutually felt but also for it to be mutually conditioning. Or according to Hatab, Heidegger’s richer non-projective and less detached phenomenology of empathy as expressed in going-along-with “can exhibit
intersubjective reciprocity, that is, not just a one-to-one ‘withness’ but a productive co-presencing, where both sides alter each other.”

Again, questions arise concerning the nature of the impending Parousia and its effect on the factual life-experience of Paul and the Thessalonians. There must have been something extraordinary about this event that allowed it to arouse such extreme affective responses ranging from joy to dread. Moreover, there must have been something distinctive about the experience of anticipating the Parousia with this admixture of feelings that enabled it to serve as the nexus for Paul and the Thessalonians to be not merely politely sympathetic to one another’s common plight, but instead to be “transpositionally” involved with each other to the extent that one’s varied anticipatory reactions could impinge upon and so transform the other’s. The word “again” is appropriately used when discussing the questions surrounding the experience of the Parousia, because these questions can be seen as corollaries to the questions which spawned the extensive treatment above about the special relationship that existed between Paul and the young church at Thessalonica. It was suggested earlier that studying this relationship was an important first step for better understanding why Heidegger saw the Thessalonian correspondence concerning the Parousia as the best interpretation of the early Christian experience of factual life as timed struggle. Now a second step will be advanced with the intent of focusing on the experiential depths of anticipating the Parousia that mutually confronted the Christianity of both Paul and the Thessalonians.
After discussing the unique relationship between Paul and these first Christians, Heidegger then moves the “IPR” course toward an examination of what he believes is the climax of Paul’s proclamation in 1 Thessalonians – “a clarification of the Parousia in response to the ‘dogmatic’ questions usually asked about it: 1) What is the fate of those who have already died, and so will not experience the Parousia? (4:13-18); 2) When will the Parousia take place, when will the Lord return (5:1-12)?” While Paul entertains both questions, Heidegger is more interested in Paul’s handling of the second question about the “when” of the Parousia.

Heidegger’s heightened level of interest for the latter question stands to reason, because even in those casual instances where a questioner invokes the interrogative “when,” she does so well within the experiential base of anticipation. In addition, the respondent must formulate an answer to the when from the realm of temporality. Therefore to ask the question when, even if the specific content is unknown, automatically creates the necessity to negotiate the human experience of anticipation and the constraints of time. Bearing this in mind, it is then even clearer why Heidegger is so intrigued by Paul’s specific application of when to the event of the Parousia. He has maintained throughout the “IPR” course that the Parousia is the event around and through which the factical experience of life for the first Christians as timed struggle is best realized. Further, it is Paul’s writings in 1 Thessalonians that offer the clearest expression of this reality because of the special relationship that obtained between him and the Thessalonian church, as seen above, and because Paul is now seen as
unabashedly broaching the topic of the Second Coming with the direct question of when. The combination of “when” and “Parousia” into the form of a question, though simple in structure, has immense conceptual potential for Heidegger. This is because as Paul seeks an answer he will be forced to identify the specific nature of the early Christian experience of waiting and anticipating, which will in turn give fuller clarity to the timed struggle that so characterizes the factual life-experience of early Christianity.

Heidegger is emphatic, however, that Paul’s efforts to devise an answer to the when of the Parousia have labored under the pressures of external criticism from those eager for a clear-cut answer and internal challenges offered by the very nature of the question itself:

Paul does not answer especially the second question [about the “when” of the Parousia] literally and directly, so that the exegetical tradition has accused him of avoiding the question and not knowing the answer…But for Paul, the question of the when is not an “examination question” with a neatly packaged content.139

The presence of these difficulties, while real and formidable, does not prevent Paul from offering an answer about the when of the Parousia. Instead, it is Heidegger’s view that because this particular when cannot be answered in a direct and literal fashion with a specific content, then an opportunity arises for Paul to develop and present a unique answer that reaches to the very heart of the early Christian experience of factual life as timed struggle.

The first indication that Heidegger believes Paul gives signaling that there are really no one-word answers in discerning when the Second Coming will take place comes through in his insistence that the experience of expecting and awaiting this future event cannot be focused upon some specific historical date and time: “the experiential structure of Christian hope, which (as we have seen) is in fact the relational sense associated with
the Parousia, runs counter to any expectation which might be defined in terms of objective time.” (“Die Struktur der christlichen Hoffnung, die in Warheit der Bezugssinn zur Parusie ist, ist radikal anders als alle Erwartung.”) 140

Because confronting the Parousia in 1 Thessalonians means transgressing the boundaries of time in its ordinary sense, several interpreters of Heidegger’s “IPR” course have creatively stated that Paul’s attempt to answer “when” actually gets transformed into a question about the “how.” For instance Caputo asserts that,

   Heidegger argues, that for Paul the relation to the “when” of the Parousia is not a matter of an objectivistic calculation, of making one’s best estimate about the length of time until then. It is not a matter of an objective “when” in an objective time, but of a “how,” of how to live until then, how to hold out and hang tough. 141

A strong basis for such an interpretation rests on the fact that immediately after Heidegger admonishes that the when of the Parousia is not quickly resolved by simple recourse to calendar or clock time, he then refers to Paul’s opening line in 1 Thes. 5, “As regards specific times and moments, brothers and sisters, we do not need to write to you…” Though different literary and rhetorical devices could be cited to explain Paul’s style here, it is Heidegger’s contention that Paul is purposefully and consciously steering the energies of the Thessalonians away from any attempts to estimate the when of the Parousia: “He [Paul] immediately deflects the question of the when away from the questions of ‘times and seasons’ (chronoi kai kairoi)…” 142

But the deflection away is also a deflection to, and for Heidegger where Paul directs the Thessalonian concern for the Parousia comes through in the next verse, “You know very well that the day of the Lord is coming like a thief in the night (1 Thes. 5:2).” That the Lord will return “like a thief in the night” means that the early Christian
experience is greatly colored by a vigilance and preparedness, otherwise the full significance of living life in the wake of an imminent Parousia could be unrealized.

Therefore it is observable once again that for Paul, according to Heidegger, it is not so much the ability to precisely answer the question “when” in regards to the Parousia that has the greatest influence on living out the factical life-experience of early Christianity as timed struggle. Rather, it is the answer to the question of “how” to live in anticipation of the Lord’s coming that becomes truly determinative of the degree to which the early Christian experience of factical life is authentically lived.

Accenting Caputo’s interpretation that the key to understanding Heidegger’s read on Paul as more of a response to “how” than to “when” in the face of the Parousia is Sheehan, who underscores the necessity of vigilance and preparedness as indispensable in the anticipatory experience of these first Christians. “To relate authentically to the Parousia means to be ‘awake,’ not primarily to look forward to a future event. The question of the ‘when’ of the Parousia reduces back to the question of the ‘how’ of life – and that is ‘wachsam sein,’ to be awake.”

That alertness is the basic trait of the how of the Parousia is made explicit for Heidegger when Paul in verses 3 and 6 of 1 Thes. 5 “juxtaposes two ways of living, two Hows of comporting oneself to the Parousia.” On the one hand, there are those who urge “peace and security” (Friede und Sicherheit), “just when people are saying, ‘peace and security,’ ruin will fall on them…” (vs. 3). Heidegger maintains that these people are totally absorbed in the world and the rest and security it can offer. As a result, they ignore the travails of factical life and so remain in the dark. It is not just a matter of disregarding the challenges that confront life in general that keep these people benighted,
but rather it is a more serious oversight that undermines their achieving a full grasp of Christian factical life-experience, since becoming and being a Christian is a constant struggle that must be heeded at every turn. Paul warns, to Heidegger’s liking, that to ignore this dimension of struggle and to be lulled into a false sense of security will eventuate in being caught off guard by the Parousia: “ruin will fall on them with suddenness of pains overtaking a woman in labor and there will be no escape (vs. 4).”

On the other hand is the comportment of the how of the Parousia represented by Paul and his beloved Thessalonians. By contrast, they are the enlightened and will not be caught unawares by the Second Coming, since they live by the credo, “Let us be watchful and sober (laßt uns wachsam sein...):”

You are not in the dark, beloved, that the day should catch you off guard, like a thief. No, all of you are children of light and of the day. We belong neither to darkness nor to night; therefore, let us not be asleep like the rest, but awake and sober (vss. 4-6a)!

Therefore the eyes of the Thessalonians are open, according to Caputo, since “they are in the light, and they understand the incessant vigilance that Christian life requires, to stay always awake, always sober, always ready.”

For Heidegger this posture of wakefulness is the better of the two hows for comporting oneself to the Parousia, since the experience of anticipatory alertness points to the very essence of the Thessalonian expression of Christian factical life-experience as timed struggle. It will be remembered that the whole aim of the second part of the “IPR” course was to discover the original features of Christian religious lived experience, and so the introduction of the importance of anticipatory alertness in the face of the Parousia becomes the poignant and privileged means of access toward fully appreciating both dimensions of the early Christian experience of factical life as a temporalized struggle.
The depths of the temporal dimension are exposed by this stance of attentive anticipation, but not only because it is expressive of a “how” toward the Parousia instead of determining an objective and datable “when.” If this were the case, then the other comportment of how expressed by the declaration to live with a sense of peace and security would also have an equal claim toward representing the temporal aspect of early Christian factual life. However, it is the how of incessant vigilance that most effectively avoids a quick temporal answer about the when of the Parousia while simultaneously leading to the temporal complexities of the timed struggle associated with early Christianity.

This is another indication of the influence of phenomenology upon Heidegger’s thinking in the early Freiburg period. Since its inception phenomenology has set out to develop and promote a highly articulated theory of time and temporal experience. Heidegger sees the Thessalonian eschatological experience of anticipatory alertness as a nuanced extension of the phenomenology of time. Being alert has the ability to synthesize and integrate in one stroke the unique way that these first Christians lived time. Heidegger contends that “alertness” gives way to an intensified temporal awareness, which then enables the Thessalonians to fully realize their Christianity in light of the Second Coming:

Actualization involves a peculiar “kairotic” moment of illumination that comes from full alertness to my situation. The when of the Parousia (being “before God”) is now determined by the how of my self-comportment…and this in turn by the actualization of my factic life-experience in and through every moment. How the Parousia stands in my life refers back to the full temporal actualization of my life, and not to a passing when.146

This statement, placed as it is toward the close of Heidegger’s treatment of 1 Thessalonians in the “IPR” lecture, brings to a head the unique temporal reckoning that
the imminent Parousia spells for the early Christian experience – it is not merely a matter of predicting and knowing a detached when and then living accordingly in a passive way; but rather it is a matter of how to live actively in a state of constant readiness that draws together past, present, and future in a special kairotic moment of personal choice and decision.

The ability for anticipatory alertness to sensitize the Thessalonians to this unique and dynamic way to live time shows undeniable similarities to Heidegger’s phenomenological element in the 1920s. James Hart, a contemporary phenomenologist who specializes in applying Husserlian phenomenology to theology and religious studies, makes the insightful connection between the experience of anticipatory alertness and phenomenological time on a general level. “What founds this horizon of world-wakefulness is the origin of time-consciousness: we have the horizon world in an encompassing ‘now’ because we retain retentions and pretend future presencings.”¹⁴⁷ Though Hart’s statement is loaded with the standard sophisticated phenomenological vocabulary related to the study of temporality, i.e., “retention” and “protention,” the main point upon which Heidegger bases his specific interpretation of the Thessalonian temporal experience is evident. To live alert and sober in anticipation of the Lord’s coming is predicated on living with a distinctive time consciousness that synthesizes and integrates past and future into a kairotic now that becomes the arena for engaged decision-making that will either enhance or diminish Christian witness.

Heidegger would have been well aware of the foundational quality of time consciousness because of his close association with Husserl and his theory of internal time consciousness. Consciousness of time would remain a very important focal point of
Husserl’s phenomenological analysis between 1900 and 1917. The result of these investigations was made ready for publication in 1928 by Heidegger who acted as the editor for Husserl’s *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness*. In this text that Heidegger produced by making extensive use of Edith Stein’s earlier 1917 editorial efforts, Husserl warns against evaluating his work on time and the consciousness of time as the last and definitive word on the topic. “I do not at all intend to offer this analysis as a final one; it cannot be our task here to solve the most difficult of all phenomenological problems, the problem of the analysis of time.”

The present study will heed Husserl’s advice concerning the complexity of this issue and so make no claim to present a thorough understanding of the Husserlian investigation of time that influenced Heidegger. Instead, what will be conveyed is a general appreciation for the fact that for Husserl reflections on time and the consciousness of time, as complex and evolving as they may be, are essential in phenomenological theory because, as Rudolf Bernet, et al. have asserted, “consciousness of time is the most fundamental form of consciousness and is presupposed in all other structures and forms of consciousness.” In other words, the consciousness of time has a founding role in regard to all other experiences, and Hart has just offered a specific instance of this with regard to the experience of anticipatory alertness (“wakefulness”) being founded upon time consciousness.

Once the foundational character of phenomenological time consciousness is acknowledged, other aspects of it can be seen as impacting upon Heidegger’s work in (and beyond) the “IPR” course. For instance, it has been argued that Paul’s correspondence to the Thessalonians is a decisive source for coming to terms with the
early Christian experience of factual life as timed struggle. This is because of its instruction that how one lives life in the expectancy of the Parousia matters more to Christian existence than deciphering an objective when of the Parousia.

That Husserl left a distinctive mark on Heidegger here is evident, since as David Carr maintains: “The first thing that must be noted about Husserl’s theory [of time consciousness] is that it is not an account of time itself but of how we experience time.” Thus time is approached by Husserl in the manner that any other theme in phenomenology would be approached, as “for us” not “in itself.” As Carr further suggests, the focus is not simply time but the intersection of time and human experience, where time is human and human experience is temporal: “the question is not how we think about or conceptualize time, but how we directly encounter and experience it.” This line of thinking has an unmistakable parallel with Heidegger’s praise for Paul’s ability to identify the crux of early Christian factual life by his insistence that the Thessalonians live the how and not the when of the Parousia. Otto Pöggeler, commenting on the important connections Heidegger makes between temporality and the facticity of life of the first Christians, bolsters the Husserlian influence when he says: “It [the factual life-experience of the Thessalonians] lives not only ‘in’ time – it ‘lives’ time itself.”

But Husserl’s influence cannot be restricted to Heidegger’s crediting Paul with capturing the deeper sense that temporality plays in the lives of the Thessalonians eager for the Lord’s return. It is just not a matter of Husserl having introduced the distinction between chronos (“when”) and kairos (“how”) into Heidegger’s religion course. Rather, it is with this distinction in place that an even more profound and far-reaching influence
of Husserl can be detected. It can be recalled that Heidegger saw the experience of anticipatory alertness as the necessary extension of the how by which the Thessalonians should live in the advent of the Parousia. Furthermore, this posture of alertness serves to enunciate a heightened temporal awareness so that they live out or actualize their Christianity in a kairotic moment where past, present, and future converge. Living wakefully in light of the Second Coming means that every moment calls for a decision that may either enhance or diminish Christian witness, and this moment is a unique temporal amalgam implicating the past, present, and future.

Heidegger is echoing Husserl here because of a stance intimated earlier when discussing Husserl’s insistence that time’s significance is measured more by the human encounter and experience of it (“how”) than by its positivistic conceptualizations (“when”). Carr believes that Husserl is led to this conviction because of the assumption that “any ability we have to conceptualize time will ultimately be based on [an] original, preconceptual encounter.”154 This original or preconceptual encounter with time is to be especially prized for its ability to allow human experience to inhabit a kairotic moment where past, present, and future come together so that existence can be fully actualized. Husserl calls this synthetic, integrative capacity of temporality at the preconceptual level the “living present” (lebendige Gegenwart), within which the past and future are assimilated and kept.155

This concept is a fine example of how Husserl’s thought on time was constantly evolving, since according to Sokolowski it is in “Husserl’s later philosophy [that] this segment, the part of one’s conscious life that is alive and actual, comes to be called lebendige Gegenwart, the living present.”156 Without question the living present is a
technical term that Husserl introduced to phenomenology to describe the immediate or pre-conceptual experience of time whose fullness is best understood as “a stretched now” that gathers present, past, and future into a privileged moment (kairos). Elsewhere Sokolowski describes the merit of Husserl’s living present for ensuring that the two important aspects of temporality do not get overlooked – its pre-conceptual sense and the related ability to be simultaneously gathered and differentiated by tense:

The term the living present signifies the full immediate experience of temporality that we have at any instant. The living present is the temporal whole at any instant. This living present, as the whole, is composed of three moments: primal impression, retention, and protention. These three abstract parts, these three moments, are inseparable.157

Without getting into the phenomenological fine points of “primal impression,” “retention,” and “protention,” which is well beyond the boundaries of this chapter’s aims, it is nonetheless important to recognize that a crucial aspect of Husserl’s theory of the living present is that in the original, pre-conceptual experience of time the three dimensions – past, present, future – are not simply “ranged alongside one another, as if one could be lacking,” according to Carr.158 Therefore, the future is not something human experience merely gazes into from time to time, nor is the past something that gets dredged up occasionally with the implication that normal life is lived only in the present. Rather as Carr so deftly conveys the richness of Husserl’s living present:

To be conscious at all is to be in past, present, and future “at once.” Not that the three dimensions interpenetrate to the point that they lose their difference…On the contrary, temporality consists precisely in the fact that they are differentiated. To be in all three “at once” is not to be in all of them in the same way. Rather, their differentiation is what constitutes a field which makes it possible for us to experience something temporal, something that is in time or takes time – that is something that happens.159

Though Heidegger does not explicitly acknowledge in the “IPR” lectures the impact that Husserl’s reflections on time and time consciousness had upon the unique
temporality that the Thessalonian church lived in light of the Parousia, Husserl’s presence is palpable. On one score, Heidegger is seen singling out the Parousia as the temporally charged event around which the essence of early Christian factual life is determined. Paul’s communication to the community of Thessalonica about actively appropriating this event into their lives means an engaged temporal experience of vigilance that will in turn reflect an enhanced or diminished Christian witness on a personal level. This “how” to live in light of the Parousia is in contrast to a more passive appropriation surrounding the “when.” Once there has been an objective calculation as to “when” the Parousia is to take place, it is then merely a matter of waiting and allowing time to pass without any true temporal engagement requiring personal investment.

But Heidegger is very clear that “Christian religiosity lives temporality as such…” (“die christliche Religiosität lebt die Zeitlichkeit…”), which is the constant opportunity for personally realizing Christian discipleship because of the need to be awake to the specific concerns of a particular situation. “Actualization involves a peculiar ‘kairotic’ moment of illumination that comes with full alertness to my situation.” So it is a living of time that is proactive and intrinsic, since the Parousia is to be waited for with alertness to how “my” Christianity can better reflect the presence of the Lord prior to his coming again in fullness. The alternative way to live time is not really a living of time prior to the Parousia but a “killing” of time, since a fixation on a positivistic conceptualized objective when in anticipation of the Lord’s return calls for a whiling very similar to that of waiting for a bus to arrive according to some established schedule.
Aside from this pre-conceptual and more original way of how to encounter and experience time where time is human and human experience is temporal, there is another score upon which Husserl’s temporal analyses exerts an influence in the “IPR” course despite Heidegger’s lack of attribution. Building on the pre-conceptual “how” of the Thessalonian self-comportment toward the coming Parousia, Heidegger believes that each attempt to actualize and realize Christian discipleship as presented in the opportunities and challenges of specific situational moments goes beyond the present and redounds to the past and future:

The when of the Parousia…is now determined by the how of my self-comportment…and this in turn by the actualization of my factic life-experience in and through every moment. How the Parousia stands in my life refers back to the full temporal actualization of my life, and not to a passing when.161

While the application of Husserl’s living present has been discussed as the temporal whole composed of past, present, and future in which a full experience of temporality can be had at any instant in the Christianity of the Thessalonians, Heidegger can actually be seen as providing a corrective to the living present. As valuable as this concept is in establishing that temporality is not a series of punctuated nows where past, present, and future are simply ranged along side one another but in fact differentiate and interpenetrate each other, Husserl nevertheless gives a priority to the present. As Carr argues:

Though past and future belong inseparably to the field of what is directly given, they still have only the status of background for the present which is the central or zero-point. From the earliest to the latest of Husserl’s meditations on time, the now – nunc stans, lebendige Gegenwart – remains the primal source, the fountain from which the river of experienced time gushes forth.162

Even if Heidegger avoids some of the basic terms of Husserlian phenomenology, he would agree fully with Husserl that such a three-dimensional temporality is to be
recognized instead of a two-dimensional understanding of time conceived as a succession of now-points. This comes through clearly with specific regard to the full temporal experience that Heidegger believes envelopes the Thessalonians’ striving to live out their Christian existence in light of the Parousia. “How the Parousia stands in my life refers back to the full temporal actualization of my life, and not to a passing when.” And while it has been discussed that the “how” of the Thessalonian self-comportment toward the Parousia includes an active and personal effort to make Christ’s presence felt in the here and now, as opposed to merely biding passively for the “when” of his full and complete presence, there is nonetheless an undeniable futural dimension fully operative here.

In other words, Paul’s exhortation to be “awake and sober” (1 Thes. 5:6) does indeed convey a need for the Thessalonians to be alert to their particular situation in the present as opportune moments for choices and decision that will positively show forth their Christianity. At the same time though, this alertness includes an important aspect of anticipatory experience that must not be overlooked. In the very passage where Heidegger mines so much wealth about Paul’s insights into the Parousia, there is mention of the enlightened and awake Thessalonians as a people who embody all three theological virtues – faith, hope, and love – with hope being a primary indicator of the important role of the future: “We who live by day must be alert, putting on faith and love and the hope of salvation as a helmut.” (1 Thes. 5:8)

In one place, Heidegger mentions that this hope (elpis) acquires a “special sense” for Paul and the impending Parousia: “hope, glory, and joy acquire a special sense (einen besonderen Sinn) in Paul’s life-context. The hopeful anticipation of the Parousia is more
a matter of enduring the Parousia, holding out, than a calculated waiting for it.”  While this affirms all that has been previously stated concerning the need for the Thessalonian vigilance to seize every moment as an opportunity to give witness to Christ’s partial presence instead of waiting for the eventual return to do so in a full sense, there is nevertheless a futuristic consideration indicated by the experience of anticipatory alertness lived virtuously in hope.

The interesting point of speculation then becomes the degree to which this theological concern may have been instrumental in causing Heidegger to break ranks with Husserl over the matter of which temporal dimension should receive priority in a phenomenological understanding of time. Husserl’s living present made plain his bias for the present as the zero-point around which past, present, and future reciprocally interpenetrate and differentiate each other in a holistic way. When Heidegger broaches the temporally significant factual life of the first Christians, lived as it is in light of the Second Coming, he is fully aware and accepting of Husserl’s integrative and synthetic understanding of time and its promise when applied to early Christian existence. However, it is widely accepted in Heidegger scholarship that the more mature Heidegger in *Being and Time* and beyond gives priority to the future as the zero-point where past, present, and future are manifested in and with human experience.

*Ecstases* becomes Heidegger’s concept of the relation among the three dimensions of time developed in *Being and Time*: “We therefore call the phenomena of the future, the character of the having been, and the Present, the ‘ecstases’ of temporality.” And though at first blush this bears a close resemblance to Husserl because of Heidegger’s suggestion that the three *ecstases* of past, present, and future are
inseparable aspects of a whole that mutually effect one another, it becomes clear that the similarity ends as the exposition ensues in the pages of *Being and Time* and the future is accorded a privileged status. This stands to reason once it is remembered that Heidegger’s main preoccupation in *Being and Time* was the existential analytic of *Dasein*, an analytic where the future is given a priority because of the projective character of *Dasein*.

By projecting itself Heidegger means that *Dasein* grasps itself in terms of its possibilities, and so in this sense *Dasein* is always ahead of itself: “Being-free for one’s ownmost potentiality-for-Being, and therewith for the possibility of authenticity and inauthenticity…means that in each case *Dasein* is already ahead of itself…always ‘beyond itself.’” Possibility is consistently esteemed over actuality in *Being and Time*. Most famously, death is considered to be *Dasein*’s ultimate or “capital” possibility, as Macquarrie designates it, since it is “the one in front of which all other possibilities lie and in relation to which they must be evaluated.” As a possibility death belongs to the future, and if the tack is actually taken whereby all possibilities are evaluated in deference to the uttermost possibility of death, then the experience of death is being “resolutely anticipated” with an honest acceptance of human finitude. All this can lead to authentic existence as Heidegger explains:

*Dasein’s* primordial Being towards its potentiality-for-Being is *Being-towards-death*.…Anticipation discloses this possibility as possibility. Thus only *as anticipating* does resoluteness become a primordial Being towards *Dasein’s* ownmost potentiality-for-Being…When one has an understanding *Being-towards-death* – towards death as *one’s ownmost* possibility – *one’s* potentiality-for-Being becomes authentic and wholly transparent.

Carr interprets this important passage with an acumen unblurred by the sensory overload possible with such vintage heady Heideggerian phraseology: “Anticipatory
resoluteness is authentic existence...My existence is truly my own – and thus authentic – when I acknowledge my finiteness. I do this by living it in the light of a future which finds its closure in death.”

Therefore, Dasein’s self-projection into and being ahead-of-itself in its many possibilities is by necessity yoked to the future, as Heidegger reaffirms: “The ‘ahead-of-itself’ is grounded in the future.” This explains the privileged position that the future holds in Heidegger’s temporal schema, since present and past are grasped together and interpreted by way of the future. He writes: “Self-projection...is grounded in the future...and is an essential characteristic of existentiality. The primary meaning of existentiality is the future.

To a God “Unseen” – The Struggle of Uncertainty in Hope and Faith

Despite the many ways that Husserl’s phenomenology influenced Heidegger in the specific area of temporality, by the time of Being and Time Heidegger makes a radical break with Husserl by the primacy of place he grants to the future as opposed to the present. It is the position of the current study that the seeds for this parting of ways over the issue of temporality and the lead role of the future were sown in the “IPR” course in a curious way. Curious, because at this point Heidegger is no doubt a full fledged member of the “Husserl circle” at Freiburg, and so there would be a natural respect maintained by Heidegger for his senior colleague and mentor, which in this instance would take the shape of promoting the virtues of a concept like the living present. As the Thessalonians live in constant awareness that the Lord will soon return, they are pressed by Paul to seize every present moment as a kairotic opportunity to express their Christianity in decisions
that will manifest glimpses of the Lord’s presence prior to his return in fullness. So it is “how” they live actively engaged in the now, as opposed to knowing the precise “when” of the Parousia and merely passively tarrying until the eventual future in-breaking of God’s presence.

As challenging as it is for the Thessalonians to live their temporality in the present by daily attempting to express their Christian discipleship, it cannot be denied that this lived temporality is one that includes an important aspect of the future. No matter how much Paul stresses their comportment now, it is done so in anticipation of an unknown futural coming. And Heidegger was also cognizant of the special challenges that living this future meant for the church at Thessalonica. It has already been established that the virtue of hope for Paul and the Thessalonians awaiting the Parousia had a “special sense,” but Heidegger elaborates on this when he states that there is a decisiveness in the waiting that transcends the usual human experience of hopefully waiting for something: “The waiting for the Parousia is decisive. Not in the human sense that the Thessalonians are hopeful for the Lord, but instead in the sense of the experience of the Parousia itself.”

What is most decisive about their experience of hopeful anticipation is that it is pronouncedly characterized by a high level of difficulty, tribulation, and struggle that absolutely consumes the Thessalonians as they live “ahead-of-themselves” toward the future of the Lord’s return at the end of time. Heidegger explains: “The experience is an absolute struggle (thlipsis)...This struggle is a fundamental characteristic, it is an absolute worry in the horizon of the Parousia, in the horizon of the eschatological return.”
These statements concerning the unique experience of Thessalonian waiting bring the current chapter to a fitting climax and closure. With all that has been said in regard to Heidegger’s diligent efforts in the “IPR” course to arrive via the Thessalonian correspondence at the kernel of “primal Christianity” (the early Christian experience of factual life as timed struggle), temporality has played a seminal role, chiefly because of the imminent Parousia. It was first discussed how the Thessalonians were exhorted by Paul to live each present moment (*kairos*) as a ripe opportunity to reflect their Christian discipleship and so image Christ’s presence prior to his definitive return. While undoubtedly this endeavor presents an ongoing challenge in the daily lives of the Thessalonians, it is not until the temporal dimension of the future and its effects on anticipatory experience are discussed that Heidegger most emphatically assigns a place and name to this struggle.

The nature of this struggle associated with the futural coming is foremost one of living with uncertainty. Van Buren points out that Heidegger’s use of the Greek *thlipsis* in identifying this struggle is a hearkening to 1 Thes. 1:6, where mention is made, “not only [of] the ‘joy’ of hope, but also [of] *thlipsis*, affliction or anxiety in the face of the uncertainty of the time and shape of the Parousia.” But it is important to realize that there is something upon which this uncertainty is predicated. It is not merely an uncertainty that could be easily alleviated if the exact time and shape of the Parousia were to be disclosed to the Thessalonians. This would amount to nothing short of undermining the entire program of phenomenological time that Heidegger has consistently promoted, as well as misidentifying the depth of the struggle that plagues the Thessalonians.
It is a temporalized struggle with the full force of temporality impinging upon the way in which this struggle is experienced. Having become followers of Christ (past), the Thessalonians are called to live each moment as an opportunity to advance their discipleship (present) in anticipation of the Lord’s return (future). The uncertainty of this futural return helps to enunciate the very depths of the struggle that in actuality permeates all temporal phases of Thessalonian existence – living before the unseen God. Sheehan, having been one of the first scholars to pour over the “IPR” course manuscripts, identifies the specialized Heideggerian vocabulary used in naming this struggle: “what Heidegger calls a *Vollzugszusammenhang mit Gott*, a context of enacting one’s life in uncertainty before the unseen God.”

As daunting as the Thessalonian call is to live their Christianity under the constraint of uncertainty before an unseen God, it is also true that this constraint is lessened, not only because they are imbued with hope which enables their projection toward the future possibility of the Parousia, but also because they possess yet another important theological virtue – faith. Therefore, their “special sense” of hope is complemented by faith, which in actuality was the indispensable virtue for establishing their relationship with an unseen God the moment they became followers of Christ. From the very beginning then, faith has prevented any of the uncertainty associated with an unseen God from becoming debilitating. In general, faith combined with hope is recognized as an accepted means for allowing Christians to project “ahead-of-themselves” toward unknown future possibilities in relationship with an unseen God, as reminded by the author of the Letter to the Hebrews: “Faith is confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about the things we do not see.”
While Heidegger does not explicitly acknowledge this important alliance of faith and hope in Thessalonian Christian existence, it can be remembered that he does nonetheless observe that the level of faith of the Thessalonians had a tremendous impact on Paul: “Paul’s life depends on their steadfastness in faith. He hands himself over entirely to the fate of the Thessalonians.” This passage from the “IPR” course was referenced earlier when discussing the special relationship that existed between Paul and the Thessalonian church and the resultant intersubjective ramifications. And while in that context Heidegger perceived the value of the virtue of faith to help forge the symbiotic relationship between Paul and the Thessalonians, he overlooked its value in the current context discussing the relationship between the Thessalonians and God! This oversight meant that when Heidegger identified the struggle associated with the futural Second Coming as an anxious uncertainty before an unseen God, he overestimated the degree of difficulty this presented to the Thessalonians. As formidable of a challenge as it may be, it is not insurmountable for them to face the imminent Parousia in uncertainty before an unseen God because of their possession of faith and its very purpose.

However without faith, the formidability of the struggle is better understood, because then the matter is changed from living in uncertainty before an unseen God to doing likewise before an absent God. The Thessalonians do not operate under such an extreme condition, since their faith disallows any equation of the unseen and the absent. Perhaps Heidegger could more easily equate an unseen God and an absent God, and for this reason sees the plight of the Thessalonians moving toward the Parousia as a struggle of unmanageable proportion. Though this is all speculation at this early point in Heidegger’s career, the entire issue of God’s absence in Nietzsche’s writings and the
flight of the gods in Hölderlin’s poetry becomes important for the later Heidegger. In fact, it is in the initial phases of his later career that he devotes energy to clarifying the necessity for theology to be centered on faith and for philosophy to maintain a faithless “atheism.” The next chapter will examine the multivalent issues of seeing (vision), God’s absence, atheism, and faith ever mindful that the formative influence of phenomenology and theology in the early Freiburg days continues.
Notes

9 Fehér, 223.
12 Ibid., 182-183, (emphasis added).
15 Ibid., 6.
16 Ibid., 7.
18 van Buren, The Young Heidegger, 15.
19 Ibid., 14-16.
20 Ibid., 23.
21 Ibid., 26.
22 van Buren, “Martin Heidegger, Martin Luther,” 171-172.
24 van Buren, The Young Heidegger, 15.
25 Michael E. Zimmerman, Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger’s Concept of Authenticity (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), 13, n. 23. Because of the unique challenge presented in gaining unencumbered linguistic access to the “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion” lectures, the author is deeply indebted to Richard Rozewicz for the invaluable assistance he provided in the translation of important and problematic passages. His availability and patience allowed for a high level of precision, especially in those instances where it was necessary to compare and contrast the original German text with Theodore Kiesiel’s English paraphrase in order to achieve interpretive integrity. The entire course is now

28 Caputo, “People of God, People of Being,” 1.
29 Ibid., 2.
35 Ibid., 218.
38 van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, 151.
39 Ibid., 148.
41 In order to obtain an acquaintance with the various “reductions” and their complexities, cf. Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Edmund Husserl’s Phenomenology* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1994), 14-17.
42 Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 49.
43 Moran, 148.
46 Ibid.
47 Moran, 85.
50 Barash, 185.
51 James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo, Translators’ Commentary to *The Piety of Thinking*, by Martin Heidegger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 113.
52 Zimmerman, 5-6.
56 Sheehan, 316.
57 Caputo, “Heidegger’s Kampf,” 44.
58 Sheehan, 319.
61 Ibid., 9.
63 Moran, 155.
64 Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 59.
65 Ibid., 60.
66 Moran, 155.
67 Caputo, “Heidegger’s Kampf,” 49
70 Spiegelberg, 144, 146.
71 Moran, 66.
73 Sheehan, 319-320.
76 Sheehan, 319.
78 van Buren, *The Young Heidegger*, 190. (emphasis added)
81 Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, 130.
82 Moran, 174.
86 Ibid., (emphasis added)
87 Caputo, “Heidegger’s Kampf,” 44.
89 Caputo, “Heidegger’s Kampf,” 45.
90 Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology,” 39.
92 Zimmerman, 138.
93 Sheehan, 321.
94 This and all scripture quotations throughout the dissertation are taken from the *New American Bible*. New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1970.
97 Sheehan, 320.
98 Ibid.


Heidegger, “Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion,” 94: “Das dechesthai hat die Trübsal mit sich gebracht, die auch fortbesteht, doch ist zugleich eine ’Freude’ lebendig, die vom Heiligen Geist kommt – die ein Geschick ist, also nicht aus der eigenen Erfahrung motiviert wird.”


Ibid., 14.


Reese, 17.


Heidegger, “Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion,” 97: “Er liefert sich also vollständig dem Schicksal der Thessalonicher aus.”

van Buren, The Young Heidegger, 190.

Sokolowski, Introduction to Phenomenology, 152.

Moran, 175.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., 287.

Ibid., 176.


Ibid.


Heidegger, Being and Time, 149.

Ibid., 80 (emphasis original).

Macquarrie, Heidegger and Christianity, 20. Dwelling will be fully treated in chapter three.

Heidegger, Being and Time, 155.


Heidegger, Being and Time, 162.

Hatab, 143.


Ibid., 205.

Ibid.

Hatab, 143.


Ibid.

Hatab, 144.

Ibid., 100; Ibid.


Sheehan, 322.


Kockelmanns, Edmund Husserl’s Phenomenology, 271.

Ibid., 272.


Ibid., 197.


Carr, 197.


Ibid., 140.

Sokolowski, Introduction to Phenomenology, 136.

Carr, 200.

Ibid., 201.


Carr, 201.


Heidegger, Being and Time, 377, (cf. also ¶ 41 and 69).

Carr, 202.

Heidegger, Being and Time, 236.

Macquarrie, Heidegger and Christianity, 36.

Heidegger, Being and Time, 354 (emphasis original).

Carr, 203.

Heidegger, Being and Time, 375.

“Existentiality (Existenzialität) is the context of the structures that constitute existence,” cf. Alfred Denker, Historical Dictionary of Heidegger’s Philosophy (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 90.

Heidegger, Being and Time, 376 (emphasis original).


Ibid., 98. Author’s translation with the assistance of Richard Rojcewicz. “Das Erfahren ist eine absolut Bedrängnis (thlipsis)...Diese Bedrängnis ist ein Grundcharakteristikum, sie ist einem absolut Bekummerung im Horizont der Parousia, der endzeitlichen Wiederkunft.”

van Buren, The Young Heidegger, 172.

Sheehan, 322.
Hebrews 11:1.

CHAPTER THREE: Authentic Rooted Dwelling and Measured Poetic Openness to the Godhead

Recapitulation

The previous chapter fostered an appreciation for the way in which phenomenology and theology influenced the scholarly activity of the young Heidegger as his academic career began in earnest during the 1920s at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau. The specific project where these two influences came together with poignancy was in the Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion course (IPR). While Heidegger could have selected several means by which to show his students the rich potential of an encounter between phenomenology and religion, it was his decision that a careful analysis of the writings of Paul would offer the best pedagogical strategy. Most specifically, it was Paul’s correspondence with the Thessalonian community and the ensuing preoccupation over the parousia that enabled an ideal platform for the convergence of phenomenological and theological concerns. That the parousia has the ability to unite these two otherwise expansive disciplines in a manageable way is clear by the issues accompanying its primary focus – the lived-experience of waiting for the second coming of Jesus.

It is well within the competencies of phenomenology to address the ontological and existential implications related to the parousia as summed up in the phrase “temporalized struggle.” These first Christians were called to maintain an alert vigilance before an elusive “when” of Jesus’ return under the empathetic guidance of Paul’s missives. Heidegger calls all that this challenge entails the essence of “primal Christianity” (Urchristentum). While Heidegger’s lectures lopsidedly devoted fuller
attention to explicating the aspects of factual life-experience and temporality (in Thessalonica), which fall more in the province of phenomenological analysis, the lectures were also an effective invitation for rich theological speculation. The course was therefore able to successfully fuse phenomenology and religion, even though the more theological fine-points of the eschatological encounter between believer and God go explicitly untreated.

This lack of treatment is especially noticeable on the “God” side of the encounter. Even when it appears as though Heidegger is veering toward an opportunity for further elaboration on the nature of the returning Lord by discussing the suddenness of the great in-breaking (“like a thief in the night,” “glance of the eye” – Augenblick), it is to no avail since he quickly resumes course back to the Thessalonians and their existential plight to authentically live the temporality of the parousia’s unknown when. Heidegger’s fascination with the significance of suddenness for temporality and perceptual seeing is more fully explicated by William McNeil, who performs a thorough study of Augenblick at various stages in Heidegger’s thought without forgetting to acknowledge the Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion course as formative in the way the concept develops.

Poetizing in a “Needy Time” and the God of Theology

As this chapter now shifts its attention away from Heidegger’s very early career and lands squarely in the domain of the later writings, a similar pattern will be noticed. Exciting opportunities for theological speculation will abound but rarely so along strict confessional lines. Nonetheless, in the move from the novice professor, striving to satisfy
philosophy course descriptions under chairman Husserl, to the established and unyoked academic, there is a more pronounced openness (be it ever so tentative and implicit) toward the ultimate theological concern – God. Nowhere is this more palpable than in the instances where Heidegger develops his concept of “poetizing” (*das Dichtende*). While a more complete development of poetizing will take place as this chapter unfolds, for now it is important to appreciate Heidegger’s “poetics” as a very selective blending of poetry and thinking which results in a languaged, meditative event with exceptional disclosive potential. But it is not just to any disclosure or revelatory possibility that poetizing aims, rather it is specifically the nature and the plight of the Deity in the present era that is its primary concern. In these contexts Heidegger does not adhere to traditional formulae and discuss the event of poetizing and one God, instead a panoply of seemingly synonymous terms are used – “the holy,” “the divine,” “gods,” “God,” “Godhead.” While this may be unsettling, it nevertheless shows that the later Heidegger is much more at ease in discussing matters that bear directly upon theology. It is Robert Gall’s contention that “by coming to Heidegger’s talk of gods and the holy we have come upon the most obviously ‘religious’ dimension in his thinking…”

Gall’s prudent use of quotation marks to qualify Heidegger’s most religious dimension resonates with the preceding observation about the unsettling condition that may arise here. As a result, there is a need to proceed cautiously in the ensuing study by performing a thorough analysis of the context in which these various terms referencing the Deity surface. Otherwise there could be a hasty dismissal of Heidegger’s work on poetics as errant and so valueless for or even unworthy of theological discourse. David White has addressed this issue in a balanced way. On the one hand, he admits that
numerous theological objections could be leveled, especially in Judeo-Christian circles where monotheism is a revered creedal tenet. He writes:

One obvious difficulty is Heidegger’s apparently random reference to “God” (or, perhaps more accurately “god”) and “the gods.” A theology based on the one deity will be very different from a theology based on more than one deity, regardless of the exact number of “the gods.”

On the other hand White recommends patience and flexibility with Heidegger’s theological imprecisions, since premature negative evaluations would rob theology proper of the salutary effects that can result from a frank dialogue with the later Heideggerian corpus. White counsels:

When Heidegger uses the word the gods, we should not interpret the plural as necessarily ruling out the resurgence of one deity, but rather as an openness indicative of the historical sweep of theological possibilities from the Greek epoch to the present.

Therefore Heidegger’s seeming carelessness in bandying about many terms, when theology would prefer he use “God” with strict consistency, need not be perceived as a threat. If instead a spirit of openness can be maintained, then the larger issues that surface in Heidegger’s discussion of poetizing can be seen as parallel to theology’s ongoing challenge to study God with terminological precision.

Beyond the mere ability to welcome parallels and note points of intersection with an attitude of openness lies the real possibility that a deeper enrichment will redound to the theological enterprise. The Heidegger at his “most religious” discusses poetics/poetizing as potentially helpful in the current “needy time” of the Deity’s/gods’ unprecedented elusiveness. It is good to keep in mind as the argument continues throughout the chapter that this needy time is a between time, since the gods have fled and the gods have yet to arrive. Since theology, regardless of agenda or affiliation, is called to present God anew in light of the unique challenges of the era in which it finds
itself, then it could greatly benefit by listening to a voice in another discipline which hea
s a similar call to situate the pressing challenges of a particular epoch within a wider settin
that acknowledges mystery. So it is not the mere detection of a tangential point where Heidegger (in his own loose fashion) and theology (with its established rigor) happen to discuss God, rather there is an urgency that gives rise to Heidegger’s more blatant interests in the Deity that promises to forge a more substantive bond with theology.

A telling passage from a 1966 interview that Heidegger granted to the newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* exemplifies the urgency for addressing concerns that are typically more within the bounds of theology per se. At the same time an attentive ear will also hear an echo from Heidegger’s very early dabblings in theological matters. However, here, Heidegger is more direct in broaching issues surrounding the Deity and the special role accorded to poetizing in such undertakings is unmistakable. At one point Heidegger responds to a question about the role of Western philosophy in the late 20th century:

> Only a god can save us. The sole possibility that is left for us is to prepare a sort of readiness through thinking and poetizing, for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god in the time of foundering (*Untergang*), for in the face of the god who is absent, we founder.

Immediately noticeable are the themes of preparation and readiness which are clearly reminiscent of the issues that consumed so much of Heidegger’s energies some 45 years prior in the Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion course. Preparedness through an alert and sober vigilance was the posture the first century Thessalonians were exhorted to assume in the face of the parousia, with very little elaboration upon the role and nature of the Deity so anticipated. Now, the role and nature of the Deity is expressly
mentioned – “only a god can save us” whose appearance is an enigmatic event of presence and absence. Moreover, the call to be ready in the current era of God’s elusiveness is directed to a much wider audience with the challenge, as well as the resources at its disposal, placed on a more transcendental level. Whereas the small church at Thessalonica, confined to the Theramaic Gulf of the Aegean Sea, was called to authentically live the temporal stretch of now and the Lord’s futural return by a full engagement with daily, factual human concerns, the call now is aimed at all of Western humanity laboring to positively integrate the pervasiveness of technology with its identity and vision. But instead of situating the focus for achieving this at the more existential level and so recommending that contemporary Western culture should wait for a resolution by confronting its day-to-day challenges, it is now at a different level where energies will be channeled with hopeful resolve. It is by recourse to God (a god, the gods) whose vexing elusiveness is nonetheless the ultimate source for enabling a successful confrontation with the current entanglement of technology and the fiber of Western humanity. Access to this “god” however is not automatic, nor does it result from quietistic passivity. Similar to the plight of the early Christians, but again at a different level, there is an active preparation that must be executed on the human side. This time it is not just a matter of making ready by a full engagement with life’s daily and nitty-gritty concerns in the interim, but rather it is through an active engagement with poetic thinking. This will usher in a heightened sensitivity receptive to a mysterious yet much welcomed god. Heidegger’s reflections on the “essential law” of poetic activity make it clear that poetic thinking involves a dynamic, alert sensitization beyond the demands of immediate, mundane concerns:
When the poet calls out for a fragrant cup, he is asking to be confirmed in the essential law of his poetic activity, which is to think with one accord of what has been and what is coming, instead of sleeping through the time which now is.  

The poet at the close of the 20th century (as well as at the beginning of the 21st century), therefore, assumes her role at a different level and with a different emphasis than the first century Thessalonian Christian. Indeed both must be alert and prepared as they dwell in their respective “between” times of the now and the appearance of the gods/God or the return of Jesus. However as the earliest Christian lived the between by a serious reckoning with life’s daily struggles, the poet resides in the between more circumspectively in Janus head fashion with one eye glancing backward for the god(s) who have fled, and the other eye looking forward for the god(s) who are yet to come (“der entflohen Götter und des kommenden Gottes”). The poet is therefore seen inhabiting the between in relationship to a mysterious Deity as opposed to being exclusively preoccupied with the existential challenges at hand. This is not meant to disparage the way in which the first Christians were called to live the temporality of their between, but more a matter of appreciating the different focus or emphasis. Both confrontations with the between can be authentic and meaningful, but the poet’s immersion in the between is tied up with and determined by the complexities of an elusive Deity.

The Pained Between of the Ontological Difference and the Wandering Stranger-Poet

Several commentators have drawn attention to the fact that Heidegger’s belief that poets are the distinctive denizens of the between is no mere fleeting thought but actually thematic at different places and with varying emphases in the later writings. Before
specific instances are cited to establish that the between is the rightful residence for the poet, it is important not to lose sight of the more foundational implications that the between in its own right purports in Heideggerian thought. In other words, the between, and the unique way the poet may occupy this spatio-temporal dimension, is not just an isolated nicety bestowed upon poetic thinking but has consequences for the overall thrust of Heidegger’s mission.

The crux of this mission was clearly stated in chapter one as Heidegger’s distinctive place in Western philosophy was presented. Heidegger was through and through the philosopher of Being, and so at the basis of any specific topic during any particular phase of his career was the attempt to address the question of the meaning of Being. It can be recalled that one interesting strategy Heidegger recommended for reawakening and deepening the question of the meaning of Being was through a novel approach to the long-standing philosophical concept known as the ontological difference. The ontological difference is the difference between Being as such and the being of entities; and it was Heidegger’s suggestion that by taking a venturesome “step back” (Schritt zurück) into the differing of this difference, philosophy would gain an unprecedented access to the meaning and functioning of Being itself. In attempting to expose the promise of Heidegger’s new approach to the ontological difference for Western metaphysics in general, the intricacies of the between were overlooked, even though its understated dynamism gave palpable force to his argument. For instance, mere mention was made of Heidegger’s firm conviction that various terms for the between must be used for the ontological difference – die Differenz, der Austrag – in order to capture the true depth of this realm as revelatory for the meaning and truth of Being.
Beyond the limits of this earlier treatment, a fuller exposition is possible by carefully studying one of Heidegger’s later writings. In October 1950 the concept of the ontological difference surfaced in the lecture “Language” as a means to elaborate the relationship between Being and language. Joseph Kockelmans remarks that this point in time marks a watershed moment in the development of Heidegger’s later thought, since “it was not until 1950 that Heidegger would finally be ready to unfold his conception of the relationship between Being and language in a systematic fashion.”

What must be borne in mind for the interests of the present chapter is an appreciation for the firm foothold that the between maintains throughout Heidegger’s evolving thought, so that in the march toward discussing the specific implications that it has for the poet and poetic thinking the between will be seen as a well grounded and versatile point of continuity in the overall Heideggerian trajectory. Heidegger’s concern for the ontological difference and language in “Language” can be seen as an intermediary step in the unfolding discussion of the between. It builds upon the initial level, where the between was implicated in a general way with the ontological difference in the project to renew the question of the meaning of Being. The final step will then be a well-grounded exposure of the pivotal role played by the between for the full disclosive functioning of poetized thinking with regard to an elusive God. Therefore, in varying degrees the concept of the between accompanies Heidegger as he traverses his way through Being, language and poetics.

In pausing to look more closely at the intermediary phase of the between, it is quickly noticed how Heidegger’s choice of alluring imagery in the lecture greatly enhances the understanding of the between and enlivens its role in the ontological
difference. Heidegger describes the differing relationship that obtains in the between of beings and Being as “pain” (der Schmerz). Metaphorizing the between of the ontological difference as pain arises in the lecture as Heidegger digresses to perform a phenomenological linguistic analysis of a poem by Georg Trakl (1887-1914) entitled “A Winter Evening.”

Though, as indicated, the main purpose of the lecture was to elucidate the relationship between Being and language, Heidegger is productively detoured in this analysis by Trakl’s poem and especially taken aback by one particular verse that recasts the understanding of the ontological difference into a much more evocative light – “Pain has turned the threshold to stone” (Schmerz versteinerte die Schwelle).

Heidegger admits that this verse is not only “startling” (Überasche), but that it is also thematic for the overall meaning of the poem: “the second verse of the third stanza is startling…This verse speaks all by itself in what is spoken in the whole poem.” The reason it holds the hermeneutical key to the entire poem is because it leads to a definition or “naming” of pain: “It names pain. Pain is the difference itself” (Der Schmerz ist der Unterscheid selber). In other words pain is the ontological difference. While it may be initially unclear why this terse, esoteric verse about pain is so telling for the between of the ontological difference, it is the advice of Parvis Emad to exercise a certain degree of patience, since “when it comes to the question of pain Heidegger expresses himself quite concisely and most cryptically.” Therefore, there is a need here to simultaneously bask in the conciseness and wade perseveringly through the cryptic in order to better grasp the deepening of the between that takes place in Trakl’s refrain – “Pain has turned the threshold to stone.” The fear of coming to a watery end while wading through the more cryptic aspect of the verse dissipates once the direct association that pain has with
“threshold” (die Schwelle) is recognized. As Heidegger elaborates, the significance that pain has for expressing the nature and function of the between vis-à-vis threshold gradually becomes clearer:

The threshold is the ground-beam that bears the doorway as a whole. It sustains the middle in which the two, the outside and the inside, penetrate each other (einander durchgehen). The threshold bears the between (Die Schwelle trägt das Zwischen).16

Even though Trakl’s passage does not explicitly say what pain is, for Heidegger it is most telling because of its identification with the realm of threshold. According to Caputo, on Heidegger’s account everything in “A Winter Evening” is organized around pain.17 So the possible innocent alignment that Trakl makes between pain and threshold provides a ripe opportunity for Heidegger to further the understanding of the between of the ontological difference. Because threshold is so connotatively rich in conveying the dynamic of juncture that takes place in a doorway or any passage, Heidegger believes that pain is part and parcel in the vivification of this middle ground of the between, where outside and inside are not strictly separated but actually coinhere and mutually influence each other in a penetrating and pervading manner (“einander durchgehen,” “einander durchmessen”): “The threshold, as the settlement of the between, is hard because pain has petrified it...The pain presences unflaggingly in the threshold as pain.”18

Because pain plays such an important role in accurately portraying the between, the threshold, as a dynamic “differential spacing,” it then becomes the mot juste to rehabilitate the workings of the ontological difference as it applies to the differing difference between beings and Being. For Heidegger, pain speaks with full expressive eloquence from the threshold joining the rift between beings and Being while preserving their difference.19
But what is pain? Pain rends. It is the rift. But it does not tear apart in dispersive fragments. Pain indeed tears asunder, it separates, yet so at the same time it draws everything to itself, gathers it to itself. Its rending, as a separating that gathers...draws and joins together what is held apart in separation. Pain is the joining agent in the rending that divides and gathers...Pain joins the rift of the difference. Pain is the [ontological] difference itself...in whose intimacy the bearing of things [beings] and the granting of the world [Being] pervade one another (in deren Innigkeit die Gebärde der Dinge und die Gunst der Welt einander durchmessen).20

Kockelmans' insights at this point are helpful. With his own terminology he reaffirms Heidegger’s metaphor of pain as able to capture the between of the ontological difference, and he also keeps matters on track by drawing attention to the unique role played by language. It should be remembered that the original purpose that leads to Heidegger’s fascination with pain in Trakl’s “A Winter Evening” was to present a systematic examination of the relationship between Being and language. Kockelmans enhances the imagery of the “painful” relationship between beings and Being with the introduction of the expression scission: “The ontological difference is a scission (Scheid) between (unter) Being and beings that relates them to each other by the very fact that it cleaves them apart.”21 As compelling as Heidegger’s concept of pain may be in restoring the dynamic depths of the ontological difference, Kockelmans points out that it is ultimately the role of language that must be appreciated as foundational:

in his later works, Heidegger often suggests that man’s thought and his speaking are a response to the saying of language as logos. Originally it is language (logos) which summons beings and Being, things and world. Language summons things [being] to give a bearing to the world [Being], and the world is summoned to “yield” things in their being things. By summoning things and world in this way, language sets world and things, Being and beings, apart without separating them; in this way it brings about the ontological difference...The ontological difference that comes-to-pass in language must be understood as a process, a differre, a bearing each other out, as if both Being and beings shared a common center that remains interior to both, a common measure that serves as the single dimension of both, a primal unity by reason of which each adheres to the other and out of which both “issue forth.”22
While Kockelmans’ assessment opens up many new doors for further reflection, especially with regard to the Heideggerian implications of the “saying of language as *logos,*” it is most important now to recognize the significance that the active realm of the painful between of the ontological difference holds in reawakening the question of Being. Doing so will firmly establish the between’s position at the very heart of the Heideggerian project. Eventually the poet will be seen addressing the issue of the mysterious Deity through poetized thinking that is exercised well within this spatio-temporal zone. At that point, the between will be appreciated as an essential and consistent coordinate along the path of the Being question and not merely a happenstance excursion. Keith Hoeller, who recently translated Heidegger’s anthology *Elucidations of Hölderlin’s Poetry,* highlights the centrality of the Being question in any of Heidegger’s explorations of the poetic. For instance, Hoeller cites Heidegger’s unequivocal declaration of the one and only purpose of his dialogue with Hölderlin: “The poetic turn toward his [Hölderlin’s] poetry is possible only as a thoughtful confrontation with the revelation of Being which is successfully accomplished in poetry.”

The revelation of Being was obviously accomplished in other poetry and with other poets, as was just seen in the discussion of “A Winter Evening.” There, Trakl’s mention of pain became for Heidegger a manifestation of Being via the between of the ontological difference. Most specifically it is Being, as alive and at work in language, which addresses the human being as *Dasein* and so allows the power of the between in the ontological difference to be seen as making it possible for Being itself (world) and being (thing) to be properly disclosed. Even in this instance where a furthering in the understanding of Being is the ultimate goal, Heidegger does not remain in the land of
heady abstraction. Instead, the revelation of Being that takes place in its close relationship with language is quickly enfleshed when Heidegger alludes to Trakl’s poem and its intriguing imagery of pain.

It is not just to any generic *Dasein* that Being in language issues its summons in order to unravel the disclosive potential of the pained differing between Being and beings. It is rather a specific call directed to the wandering stranger. Heidegger relates the import behind the specification of this calling when he says elsewhere: “All that Georg Trakl’s poetry says remains gathered and focused on the wandering stranger (*auf den wandernden Fremdling*).”25 With the recipient of the call clearly designated there is likewise a specificity given to the content of the call, as Heidegger’s interpretation of “A Winter Evening” shows:

> the third stanza begins with an emphatic calling:/Wanderer quietly steps within./ Where to? The verse does not say. Instead, it calls the entering wanderer into the stillness. This stillness ministers over the doorway (*das Tor*). Suddenly and strangely the call sounds:/ Pain has turned the threshold to stone./26

Thus, Being at work in language beckons the wanderer to a new disclosure about its meaning and truth. Being is not only understood in a lopsided dichotomized way through the prism of beings. This is the traditional approach of Western metaphysics and its manner of using the ontological difference. Instead, the admonition to heed the pained/painful active process as characteristic of the relationship between Being and beings resonates with Heidegger’s call for the “overcoming of metaphysics” discussed in chapter one. For Heidegger, metaphysics neutralizes this dynamic differing relationship by setting up an unbalanced and bifurcated conceptualization of the difference between Being and beings. George Kovacs comments on Heidegger’s sense of the plight that the ontological difference suffers at the hands of Western metaphysics: “the difference is
being wrapped up in darkness, because the primacy of beings over Being characterizes metaphysics.”

Heidegger is not hopeful that this biased, opaque pall of metaphysics, which inhibits the understanding of Being, can ever be removed. Thus in one of his latest works (perceived by some because of its lateness as a “landmark” statement), he urges a radical measure to ensure that the Being question is pursued properly and without the encumbrance of metaphysics’ bias toward beings. In this rather extreme tactic Heidegger is willing to sacrifice the rich potential that the Being question could derive from engaging the ontological difference at its most active sense expressing the pained rifting and joining between Being and beings, and instead counsels a more direct approach to Being itself. Heidegger’s student André Schuwer points out the severity of this methodological shift when he writes:

we observe that in his preface to “Time and Being” Heidegger writes that he wants to say something about his endeavors to think Being without [beings] das Seiende (Sein ohne das Seiende zu denken); that he wants to think Being without regard to a Be-gründung, a foundation of Being in and through beings.

As Heidegger’s analysis in “Time and Being” ensues Schuwer’s remarks ring true. Being is directly confronted and discussed with some of the more fascinating and complex conceptual gems that become thematic throughout the later Heideggerian oeuvre. For instance, he exploits the literal significance behind the ordinary German expression “Es gibt,” usually rendered “There is,” in order to discuss the mysterious giving nature of Being and time. As the essay continues, Heidegger eventually presents his ultimate concept for understanding Being – das Ereignis, the event of appropriation.

Even though Heidegger uses novel concepts to discuss the nature of Being in a straightforward manner, several commentators contend that this should not be interpreted
as an all out dismissal of the importance of the ontological difference and its dynamic functioning. Kockelmans sees Heidegger’s tack as an attempt to fit the workings of the ontological difference within the newer conceptualizations of Being’s functioning so as to prevent any recidivism to the stilted ways of metaphysics. He writes:

“to think Being without beings” does not mean that the relationship of Being to beings is not essential and that one can leave this relationship one day out of consideration. It says, rather, that Being must not be conceived of in the way which it has been in metaphysics. Thus, what Heidegger later rejects is not the ontological difference as such but rather “the metaphysical characterization of the ontological difference…”

Kovacs voices a similar concern. Because the ontological difference is a core issue in Heidegger’s thought, it cannot be easily passed over in the seeming rush of the later Heidegger to reach Being itself:

The sense of wonder about [B]eing does not abolish but rather deepens the primordial ontological difference…Heidegger’s way of thinking (even in its later and latest development), then, should not be interpreted as a quick passage from beings to [B]eing, as the light-hearted celebration of the death of metaphysics…

Despite any of the new and promising concepts that Heidegger may introduce in his more direct approach to Being, the attempt to hastily by-pass the experience of the between of the ontological difference would only serve to retard any real advance in the entire question of Being. Therefore, Kovacs is a strong proponent of not losing sight of beings when attempting to arrive at a true grasp of Being. He also advocates paying close attention to the dynamic of the active between of the ontological difference in order to achieve an appreciation of Being’s profundity.

The true comprehension of the meaning (of the very concept) of [B]eing, then, comes out of the experience of the nature as well as of the tension of the ontological difference…the detour from the experience and exploration of “the” difference in the ontological difference would also obstruct, at the same time, the new language of the fullness of Being, of the “mystery” of Being…
The challenge set before the thinker, therefore, is to fully embrace the experience of the nature and tension of the between in the differing relationship of Being and beings. This familiar challenge arose in chapter one in conjunction with the “step back” (der Schritt zurück). There the emphasis was on overcoming traditional metaphysics. Heidegger prompted the philosopher to step back into the differing difference of the ontological difference, and exclusive attention was devoted to the nature of the step back as effective for restoring philosophy to its proper task to think Being. Now, the same invitation to enter into the ontological difference has a different emphasis. The current effort seeks to better understand the “where” (the between) that the thinker is urged to enter into, as well as to gain clarity about the desired result of inhabiting this unique spatio-temporal realm – to obtain a more primordial comprehension of the meaning of Being itself. Kovacs makes the specifics of this invitation clear:

> The main task of entering into the primordiality of the ontological difference is quite ambitious…not an abandoning but, rather, a deepening (an entering into the essential nature) of “the” difference as such between beings and [B]eing…in such a way that neither side (term) of the relation abolishes the other, that the balance (the difference between them) is safe-guarded and more deeply rooted.33

This ambitious project to enter into the ontological difference in order to experience and uphold the nature and tension of the between that obtains in the relationship between Being and beings will eventuate in a deeper meditation on the mystery of Being itself only if the “right” thinker responds to such a challenge. The thinker must be of the more receptive and passive type and not inclined toward manipulation or control of the final outcome of this undertaking. Heidegger reiterates in different places that the ontological difference (and its spatio-temporal between) is not something made or produced by the thinker; it is rather something found, discovered, entered into by the thinker who is open. Thus the right thinker, who possesses the optimal
disposition for exploration and discovery, is the wandering stranger. She is eager to
ebrace and inhabit the pained rifting and gathering that so poignantly captures the
activity of the between of the ontological difference.

Heidegger calls for such a receptive, passive and adventurous spirit when
encountering the ontological difference in the greatest portion of his lecture course *Basic
Concepts*. According to Kovacs, sections 2-19 of this 25 section lecture let the
ontological difference speak in an inviting and enrolling way so that it leads the thinker to
experience and enter into the difference.\(^\text{34}\) Moreover, it is Heidegger’s contention that
such an invitation to explore coupled with a response marked by an attitude of openness
and docility will result in a true appreciation of the between, since rediscovered will be
“the unthought sojourn (*der Auftenhalt*) of the human being in the differentiation between
Being and beings.”\(^\text{35}\)

When the wandering stranger in Trakl’s poetry was initially introduced above, the
finer points of this character were omitted in order to focus on the powerful imagery of
pain that Heideggerfastens upon in the poem as the best expression to capture the
between in its fullness. While acknowledging that Heidegger interprets the poetry of
Trakl as revolving around this wandering stranger, it naturally follows that when the key
metaphor of pain arises in the poem, it is none other than the wandering stranger who will
become closely associated with, affected by and witness to the painful rifting and
gathering that takes place in the between of the ontological difference. In other words,
this seminal figure in Heidegger’s interpretation of Trakl in some way embodies or
represents the pained relationship between Being and beings. Presently the aim is not to
revisit the importance of the pain metaphor, but rather to pay closer attention to the
wandering stranger and the distinctive qualities that enable her to be such an effective agent for disclosing not only in a narrow sense the meaning of Trakl’s poetry, but also in an even broader way the meaning of Being itself. After all, the sole purpose of any Heideggerian dialogue with a poet is ultimately for the benefit of Being’s understanding.

Recall that the search is on for someone who will willingly enter into the ontological difference as a sojourner in order to explore and discover the ramifications of its differentiating between. The wandering stranger of Trakl’s poetry is the best candidate for such an endeavor because she possesses the requisite trait of openness for an adventurous journey without any rigid itinerary. Paying careful attention to the way Heidegger artfully expands upon this enigmatic figure gives evidence that the wandering stranger has the wherewithal to strike out on a road less traveled. When he makes the familiar bold assertion that everything about Trakl’s poetry centers on the wandering stranger, Heidegger immediately follows with a very specific descriptive definition of who this person is: “He is, and is called, ‘he who is apart’ or ‘he who has parted’” (Er ist und er heißt “der Abgeschiedene”). Exploiting the productive ambiguity built into the term der Abgeschiedene as either someone who is “apart” or someone who has “parted” is the best means to promote the candidacy of the wandering stranger for entering into the between and embodying its significance. An initial grappling with the connotation of “apartness” draws attention to the odd or unusual demeanor of this wandering stranger. Someone is indeed apart when s/he in some way differs or stands out from what is accepted as the normal course of affairs, or as Karsten Harries writes in his study of Heidegger’s use of Trakl’s poetry: “Heidegger understands the Abgeschiedene as one
who has taken leave from the community. He is no longer with us but stands alone and apart, a stranger.”

But merely indicating that the wandering stranger is quirky because she is apart from others does not really build the case that her qualifications best suit her for an exploratory excursion into the between in order to expose its significance for the meaning of Being. Attention must therefore shift from the weird aspect of the wandering stranger to the fact that she is also a wanderer. In other words, the notion of being apart must be held in tension with the notion of the one who has parted (departed), and thus more fully appreciating the productive ambiguity present in der Abgeschiedene. Heidegger makes such a shift in connotative emphasis possible when he goes so far as to call him a “madman” (der Wahnsinnige). This designation should not be taken in the pejorative sense, which would only serve to revert the character analysis of the wandering stranger to the odd or apartness aspect. However when it is understood in a deeper sense, it becomes integral in the cause to promote the wandering stranger as that adventurous spirit eager to enter into and explore the between of the ontological difference for the treasures it may bear for the meaning of Being. The wandering stranger as mad more positively indicates one who is indeed strange and apart from others because she is a willing wanderer who has departed. Heidegger clarifies and specifies this important nuance as he writes:

Does the word [madman] mean someone who is mentally ill? Madness here does not mean a mind filled with senseless delusions. The madman’s mind senses – senses in fact as no one else does. Even so, he does not have the sense of the others. He is of another mind (Sinn). “Sinnan” means originally: to travel, to strive for…, to take a certain direction. The departed one is a man apart, a madman, because he has taken his way in another direction.
The wandering stranger is therefore not just some meandering eccentric whose estrangement is to be either mocked or pitied. Rather, his alienation is the result of a deliberate choice to exercise the unique gift of a special sense or way of thinking that allows him to eagerly embark on journeys not typically taken by others. The thinker who can assume the mantle of the wandering stranger is thus best suited to enter into the between of the ontological difference, undaunted by the uncharted and lonely course but nevertheless hopeful of what lies ahead for discovery.

Heidegger’s interpretation of Trakl’s “A Winter Evening” hints at how the wandering stranger exhibits a spirit of wanderlust with very purposeful aims. By keeping the imagery of pain on the periphery and paying closer attention to Heidegger’s general synopsis of the structural flow of the poem, the figure of the wandering stranger begins to emerge in her own right as an eager traveler whose special sense of direction leads her to follow less trodden paths.

To facilitate the examination of Heidegger’s synopsis a copy of the poem in German and English appears in Appendix 2. The poem’s description of a winter evening begins in the first stanza by drawing attention to two noteworthy occurrences taking place outdoors – snowfall and the ringing of the vesper bell. For Heidegger, what is happening outside has bearing on what is occurring indoors:

> The things outside touch the things inside the human homestead. The snow falls on the window. The ringing of the bell enters into every house. Within, everything is well provided and the table set.40

The second stanza takes on an added significance for the current study. By virtue of the broad contrast it introduces between the characters who are inside and those who are outside, the wandering stranger is able to make a fitting debut. Heidegger writes: “While many are at home within the house and at the table, not a few wander homeless on

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darksome paths.” However it is in the third stanza where the full force of the wandering stranger comes to the fore. According to Heidegger, it is this stanza that “bids the wanderer enter from the dark outdoors into the brightness within. The houses of the many and the tables of their daily meals have become house of God and altar.”

Despite Heidegger’s disputable interpretive style, he nonetheless allows the poetry of Trakl to speak with a poignancy and precision that extols the virtues of the wandering stranger for the purposes at hand. First, the figure of the wandering stranger is depicted as an unusual traveler on otherwise “darksome paths,” who nonetheless is willing to enter into the illuminated and warm house which will entail the obvious necessity of crossing over a threshold. While indeed stepping over a threshold can be easily overlooked as an uneventful gesture in the normal course of locomotion, it must not be forgotten how the threshold in the poem is intimately associated with the all-important metaphor of pain. (“Pain has turned the threshold to stone.”) And it was discussed earlier how the imagery of pain for Heidegger best expresses the spatio-temporal dimension of the between. This being the case not just for any between, but for the very lofty tension of rifting and gathering that obtains in the relationship between Being and beings – the ontological difference. Caputo effectively captures the comprehensive Heideggerian interpretation so that nothing is lost in regard to the character of the wandering stranger:

On the thinker’s account, everything in the poem is organized around the pain. For it is pain which “institutes” this scene by dividing outside from inside, darkness from light, cold from warmth, hunger from nourishment, wandering from rest. Pain drives the traveler within and motivates the whole movement of the poem, setting the wanderer on his path, setting up the distinction between inside and outside. Pain is the differential spacing. That is very powerful.
Although Caputo showcases the important link between the wandering, “mad” stranger and pain, and even further specifically commends the evocativeness of pain as a powerful concept, the ultimate purpose of his analysis is to take issue with the way Heidegger restricts the imagery of pain to an abstract description of the rifting/gathering tension between Being and beings. Caputo is disappointed that Heidegger does not allow pain, in all its connotative fullness, to burst forth and speak in the way that it usually does – pain in terms of sensitivity as it applies to the more physical realm of human existence. Hence Caputo admonishes:

But do not be misled. For this pain, the thinker’s [Heidegger’s], has nothing to do with feeling or actually (“factically”) being cold, hungry, weary, desperate. That would be a thoughtless sentimentalizing of the poem in terms of feeling and sensation. We have to break this habit of thinking that this is a pain in anyone’s hide…

For Caputo, then, Heidegger’s concept of pain as found in the poetry of Trakl has unfortunately been relegated to the cozy conceptual realm where the differing and tense relationship between Being and beings is comfortably entertained:

A great poet might poetize aboriginal polemos, the conflict between Being and beings which in tending apart are led back towards one another [the differing between of the ontological difference]. But no great poet would ever be caught dead poetizing war, not a real, actual, factical war, with “broken mouths” and “spilt blood,…"

The veracity of Caputo’s charge cannot be summarily dismissed or ignored, for Heidegger does (by his own admission) take the physical suffering out of pain in its more poetic use and functioning. In another place where Heidegger again discusses Trakl’s poetry and the nature of pain, he clearly indicates that: “Its nature remains impenetrable to any mind that understands pain in terms of sensitivity.” However, there is more room for refuting the corollary that Caputo develops from the charge that Heidegger defangs the meaning of pain when he states that Heidegger has thus spiritualized the notion of
pain to the degree that it is a vaporized nothingness applicable to no one and no real situation:

[This] Pain is the rift between Being and beings, world and thing…not the suffering but the Unter-Scheid [differing difference] is what comes to pass in pain. Heidegger has taken the suffering out of pain and distilled it into its essential spirit: nobody is wehleidig, miserable, or cut to the quick.47

This critique by Caputo is certainly justifiable and cogent – pain in its nitty-gritty physicality is sanguinely conceptualized to capture the more ethereal tensive relationship between Being and beings. However, if the figure of the wandering, mad stranger is kept in purview, then an acknowledgment of pain’s reorientation need not mean its tragic impoverishment. To remove the physical suffering from pain and so “distill” it into a more spiritual plight does not necessarily entail its complete anesthetization and inapplicableness to real people and events. No, the wandering stranger is the flesh and blood person, the somebody who by his close association with the pain of the threshold can be seen as undertaking and so embodying a spiritual anguish. It is more a matter of emphasis rather than a complete denial. While pain for Heidegger is not specifically expressed in a bodily or physical way, it is nevertheless able to be expressed in its more spiritual aspects through the itinerary of the wandering stranger.

The validity of Caputo’s observations would be grossly misrepresented if they were taken to mean that Heidegger ignores or downplays the significance of life’s real challenges. Such a claim can be easily countered in several ways. First, and most close at hand, recourse can be made to the previous chapter. There it was vehemently argued how important the real “factual” life experiences of the first Christians were for coming to an understanding of the active waiting for the return of Jesus. To arrive at the Urchristentum (the original or “primal” Christian experience) Heidegger employed phenomenology to
expose the depths of the historically enacted real life experience of St. Paul’s Thessalonians, thus warding off any understanding of early Christian experience as a generalized state of passive indifference in anticipation of some abstract and nebulous eschaton.

The Equilibrium of Human Existence and the Phenomenology of the Body

Moving beyond the boundaries of this work, there is a second means available to safeguard Caputo’s critique from hardening into an inaccurate depiction of Heidegger as one-sidedly concerned with the speculative and ethereal. Once again Heidegger’s relationship to phenomenology will prove most beneficial on this front. Heidegger embraced the phenomenological method in his first Freiburg period study of the primal Christian experience to ensure that the entire range of the factical life concerns of the Thessalonian community would be completely exposed and fully appreciated. Now, at a different level, Heidegger’s affiliation with the phenomenological movement is crucial in rescuing him from any *ad hominem* charge of solely addressing matters abstract. Such a charge would actually place Heidegger in the same camp as René Descartes, who was notorious for advancing numerous dualisms which left an impressionable mark on the complexion of Western philosophy. In fact, it is in the wake of this tide of influence created by Descartes that phenomenology had its genesis.

While it would be impossible here to discuss all the specific ways in which the philosophy of Descartes (and subsequent Cartesianisms) gave shape to the phenomenological movement launched by Husserl, it is nonetheless important to appreciate its general influence as precipitory and enduring. For instance, in discussing
Phenomenology’s efforts to overcome one of Descartes’ more celebrated dualisms, that between subjectivity and objectivity, Dermot Moran observes:

[in] one way or another, phenomenology is always in a tension with Descartes and hence with the subjective turn of modern philosophy – either radicalizing it or seeking to overcome it.48

For Husserl’s part the tension with Descartes would be resolved more along the lines of attempting to radicalize it rather than by overcoming or dismissing it.

As noted in the previous chapter Husserl developed one of his core tenets, the intentionality of consciousness, as a strident means to break down the impenetrable barrier that Descartes erected between subject and object. This demonstrated that there is a mutual belonging and reciprocal influence that obtains immediately between subjectivity and objectivity. According to Moran, the overcoming of the subject-object divide in Husserl is really a retrieval of the essential radicality of the Cartesian project.49

In other words, Husserl reconciles the chasm between subject and object, occasioned by Descartes’ valorization of the isolated thinking subject (*cogito ergo sum*), by finding a deeper meaning of subjectivity itself. Elisabeth Ströker maintains that Husserl was able to achieve a delicate balance as a philosophical reformer, since he respected the foundations set forth by his predecessors as the basis for any innovation. She makes the following general observation in light of the problem of knowledge:

When Husserl regarded the epistemological tradition which had, at least since Descartes, arrived at absolute foundations of knowledge by referring back to subjectivity, and when he realized that in the past those foundations had never been reached, he drew the conclusion that a completely new philosophical discipline was needed with quite new methods, if it was to get to the foundations. He therefore set his phenomenology off against all tradition.50

Thus in referring back to subjectivity as foundational in order to discover something new that could rehabilitate the estranged relationship between subject and
object, Husserl was living the spirit and trusting the potential behind the very anthem of phenomenology – “to the matter itself.” When Husserl ventures back to subjectivity – the matter itself – he does not discount Descartes’ work on the thinking subject but rather plumbs its depths. Instead of resting content with Descartes’ notion of the individual subject as res cogitans – a thinking substance entirely independent from objective reality (matter) – Husserl describes the subject as ego-cogitatio-cogitatum. This implies a self with an intentional structure whose acts of consciousness are in immediate and reciprocal contact with objective correlates. Moran is therefore justified when he states: “We have overcome the subject-object divide only by finding a deeper meaning within subjectivity itself.”

Any advance credited to Husserl for having used Descartes’ vaunted subject only to radicalize it and so put it in proper rapport with the objective world is a hollow victory if prized for its theoretical prowess alone. It is not just a case of one philosopher besting another philosopher at his own game by some clever maneuvering. Instead, the impact of Husserl’s radical rethinking of the Cartesian project itself redounds to the very understanding of who humankind is and the kind of anthropological image that is ultimately conveyed. One of the true contributions of phenomenology in its assiduous efforts to overcome the strict dichotomy of subject and object is a balanced description of human existence.

William A. Luijpen admits that phenomenology’s penetration into the history of Western thought by touting such a balanced description is most praiseworthy, since past philosophical systems were more or less skewed exaggerations vying for either a
spiritualistic or a materialistic understanding of the human person. Phenomenology, however, achieves a rare instance of “equilibrium” in the history of philosophy:

Such a moment of equilibrium is present in the [contemporary] philosophy known as existential phenomenology. This philosophy knows how to retain the values perceived by materialists and exaggerated spiritualists, without falling into the one-sidedness of either system.52

Luijpen dubs materialism in its extreme variety “materialistic monism” and relates its depiction of human existence as one whereby the person as an entity is inserted into reality just as all other things are: “man is a thing in the midst of other things of the world, a fragment of nature, a moment in the limitless evolution of the cosmos.”53 At the other extreme is “spiritualistic monism.” Here the subject pole is absolutized to the extent that things and the world have no meaning without human subjectivity. In the more graceful words of Luijpen, leaning heavily on the insights of French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty: “spiritualistic monism lets the density of the material things evaporate into the thin air of ‘contents of consciousness.’”54

Existential phenomenology is able to reach a condition of equilibrium between these two systemic extremes by at once rejecting their respective excesses and embracing the reality which these systems have respectively slighted – existence. In other words, when striving to answer the question, “What is humanity?,” the phenomenologist fastens upon the concept of existence. To be human is fundamentally and essentially to “exist” which means to go out from any given state in which one finds oneself. Luijpen clarifies how the concept of existence is instrumental in creating a state of equilibrium between the spiritualistic and materialistic accounts of humanity: “man is a subject, undoubtedly, but he is an existing subject, a subject which places itself outside itself, in the world.”55
Much of this should have a familiar ring, since it receives an alternative classic expression by Heidegger in the well known existential analytic of *Being and Time*. When Heidegger uses the all-important term “existence” there, he does so in a very restricted and specified way. He writes in a cautionary and illuminating tone:

To avoid getting bewildered, we shall always use the Interpretive expression “presence-at-hand” for the term “existentia”, while the term “existence”, [Existenz] as a designation of Being, will be allotted solely to *Dasein*. The “essence” of *Dasein* lies in its existence.\(^{56}\)

It was mentioned in chapter two that when Heidegger talks about the distinctive being of the human person in his earlier period he generally uses the expression *Dasein*. What is important here is to take notice of the fact that the being of the human being or *Dasein* and existence proper are inextricably linked. While a complete exposition of the ramifications of *Dasein* as existence and existence as *Dasein* is impossible here, it is possible to appreciate how Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis of *Dasein* in its own right contributes to the condition of equilibrium between any excessive spiritualistic or materialistic conceptions of humanity.

Heidegger further specifies the attribute of existence applicable to *Dasein* as being *a priori* in the world. *Dasein* is always in a world, and the far reaching implications of this specification are realized in pertinent sections of *Being and Time*’s Division I. There it is clear that Being-in-the-world (in-der-Welt-Sein) as the constitutive state of *Dasein* will influence the course that Heidegger’s ensuing ontological exposition of human existence will take. Regardless of the manifold ways or modes by which *Dasein* may be examined, it is imperative not to lose sight of that which is ultimately vivifying and foundational:

In each case *Dasein* exists [and]…*Dasein*’s Being takes on a definite character, and they must be seen and understood *a priori* as grounded upon that state of Being which we have called “Being-in-the-world.”
An interpretation of this constitutive state is needed if we are to set up our analytic of Dasein correctly.57

Recognition of being-in-the-world as the essential state of the existence of Dasein allows Luijpen to advance the following synthetic conclusion: “As Heidegger expresses it, to be man is to-be-in-the-world, or, what amounts to the same, Dasein.”58

The phrase being-in-the-world thus has become common currency used among existentialists and phenomenologists to describe the basic condition of human existence. The immediate implication of this expression that allows it to be a force of equilibrium between the philosophical extremes of spiritualism and materialism is the assertion that there can be no self without a world, with which the self is in immediate and a priori interaction, as John Macquarrie observes: “We do not begin with a self to which a world gets added on, so to speak; we begin with a unity of being-in-the-world, and out of this prior unity self and world emerge in a reciprocal relation.”59 While this reminder from Macquarrie may appear redundant and self-evident in light of all the preceding, it is within the context of these remarks that this astute translator of Being and Time offers an important refinement for the concept of being-in-the-world:

To say that there can be no self without a world is also to assert that there can be no self without a body, for it is in virtue of the body that we are in the world. Only as embodied selves can we act on the world or be acted upon by the world. The body is not an appendage to the self, still less an encumbrance to the self, but an essential part of personal being.60

With this meaningful expansion upon the significance of being-in-the-world, the equilibrium touted by phenomenology which avoids the theoretical extremes of both materialism and spiritualism now assumes a more specific articulation with practical implications. No longer is the discussion focused exclusively on the generic human subject who is immediately involved in an objective world; instead, the subject is now an
embodied self whose interaction with the world signals very down-to-earth consequences for cultivating a balanced grasp of human existence.

The value of equilibrium is furthered and better appreciated, since lopsided spiritualistic or idealistic views of the self emphasize, in the words of Macquarrie, “the spiritual and intellectual side of man’s being, to the disparagement of the bodily and worldly side.” Therefore, the soul and its inner life are what really matter – the soul is the real self and the body merely its habitation. And conversely without the expression of this more practical equilibrium, the one-sided understanding of human existence as materialistic may lead to an attitude of “sensualism,” as Macquarrie puts it, which makes “the satisfaction of bodily needs the highest good for man.”

Heidegger’s *Dasein* therefore becomes the effective conceptual means that allows him to join ranks with the phenomenological flank to revisit and radicalize Descartes’ coveted subject in order to stave off any resultant rigid dualisms. To this point, two such dualisms have been exposed and tempered: the more generalized severe split between subject and object and the related strict dichotomy between mind and body. For *Dasein* to exist, it must do so as a being-in-the-world, which is further specified as a concrete, embodied existence in contrast with a bare thinking subject.

The concept of *Dasein* is not something that Heidegger devised in a vacuum. As a formidable means to specifically soften the body-soul division, it is best seen in the wider context of phenomenology’s crusade to radicalize yet another extreme of Cartesian *cogito* philosophy. Recall the insight of Moran cited earlier that in one way or another phenomenology is always in a tension with Descartes. The mind-body problem which finds an articulate resolution in Heidegger’s *Dasein* was greatly influenced by the work
of Husserl. In fact, David Woodruff Smith, in his analysis of the mind-body issue in Husserl, claims that an essential force behind Heidegger’s formulation and institution of his trademark *Dasein* concept was Husserl’s correlative labors to salvage the mind-body problem from remaining mired down in the ossified dichotomy established by Descartes.

Smith writes:

> Husserl fashioned an intricate ontology of mind and body, coordinated with a rich phenomenology of our awareness of body and mind, as well as an epistemology of the kinds of evidence we have about body and mind.\(^{63}\)

Husserl offers the most in-depth discussion of the mind-body experience in the Second Book of *Ideas* (1912), and Smith is convinced that this was familiar to Heidegger and most formative upon his views of *Dasein*:

> Husserl’s groundbreaking work in *Ideas II*, separating crucial aspects of mind and body as we experience them, was known to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. The influence of *Ideas II* is at work in the well-known views of Heidegger on the practical, social activities of the self…\(^{64}\)

The embodied self becomes *Dasein* for Heidegger, which is best appreciated as one of his signature conceptual pieces that nonetheless owes a great deal to the Husserlian confrontation with the Cartesian denigrations of mind and body unity. As Smith observes: “Heidegger explicitly re-christens the traditional notion of the self or subject, the human being as ‘*Dasein,*’ with the aim of shedding *inter alia* suggestions of Cartesian dualisms.”\(^{65}\)

The particular challenge of these dualisms stems from Descartes’ solipsistic method concerning the functioning of human consciousness, which accords no serious role to the body. Luijpen corroborates the problematic nature of this method when he suggests: “Descartes’ method locked consciousness up in itself: consciousness, for him, was consciousness of consciousness. Consciousness was isolated, walled in, and existed
Abjuring any caricaturizations of Descartes’ method, it must be borne in mind that while he did isolate consciousness or soul and the body from each other and so placed them along side each other as complete substances, he nevertheless believed that there are relations between consciousness and the body. But because his steadfast view of the body as a complete substance meant that it was “extension” only (res extensa) – and so fully subjected to the laws of extension – the sad and irrevocable result from Smith’s perspective is that “Descartes reduced the body to a mechanical body whose essence is exhausted by the mathematics of classical mechanics.” This particular dualism posed a most formidable challenge to phenomenology and would require serious energy if a concept like Heidegger’s Dasein were ever to see the light of day. Not only had Descartes introduced yet another separation between consciousness and the body, but now the body was seen merely as a machine. Only from this very specified Cartesian viewpoint does the dualism acquire its real bite, since now it is possible to speak of the body alone. Luijpen discusses how such a solitary view of the body excludes the important corrective of phenomenology, which takes into consideration that the body is a human body and is given to human beings in a very unique mode: “my body is given to me – namely, as ‘mine’…The body is properly human only in the indivisible unity which man is…The body is my body in its participation in the conscious self.”

The crucial point of divergence that is being advanced between the Cartesian mechanized body of extension and the phenomenological humanized body of integration is that the former stance views the body as “a” body which is in and amongst other extended bodies. On the other hand, the latter position particularizes the body and appreciates the profound contribution that it offers toward the realization of fuller human
personhood. Condensing the pertinent insights of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, Luijpen traces the lineaments of the contrast in the following manner:

According to Descartes’ description the body is always only “a” body, i.e., a body pertaining to the immense group of bodies…The body which occurs in anatomy, biology, and physiology is merely “a” body. These sciences describe the body as a thing in the world. Their descriptions are based upon the observations of [people] of science, but they do not explicate my perception of my body as mine.69

So the promising foil offered by existential phenomenology that prevents the body from becoming yet another calculable and measurable reality of the natural sciences is its unflinching assertion that the human body, viewed in its immediate and reciprocal relationship to the conscious self, becomes the indispensable condition by which a person assumes a unique identity and realizes her distinctive possibilities. The anatomical and physiological questions do not focus on the body as such a condition for the realization of personal being and authenticity, but rather address concerns about how the body works. In order to study how the body works a certain detached objectivity is undoubtedly required, but along with this are the negative tendencies to ignore the unique conscious self that is deeply and intimately interwoven with this body as specimen, and moreover to overlook how such an in tact unity becomes the very nexus for revealing and manifesting distinctive personal meaning. As Luijpen indicates:

My body, however, is mine through its mysterious reference to me, to the conscious self with which it has fused. My body has even grown so much into one with me that in some cases I do not hesitate to speak of “me” when I mean my body.70

Well aware on a professional level of the abuses that may result when the body is specimenized and thus divorced from the conscious self is the renowned Dutch phenomenological psychiatrist Jan H. van den Berg. According to van den Berg, the Cartesian conviction that the body as res extensa belongs to the world of other material
objects is “extraordinarily fertile to medical science. For an object one has can be dissected, and in this way one can try to understand it [how it works], whereas that which is cannot be dissected.” And certainly the body as indivisibly part and parcel of a unique conscious self (an “I,” a “you,” a “she”) is not a separate possession that one “has” but rather an integral dimension of who one “is” and may become. The indispensable connection between the personal conscious self and her very body is expressed by van den Berg as follows:

A person needs only to look at his hand to know that he is there himself, in his hand. Legion are the instances that make it clear that we are our bodies…

Talking about one’s body means talking about oneself. A person washes himself, not his body. He shaves himself, not his face. And if he is shaving his chin, he is not shaving the chin of the face he has, but of the face he is. He who is cutting his nails; not for a moment does he estrange himself from his hand, unless there is something wrong with it. A disturbance, a disease, has to enter the body one is to make the body one has come into existence. Or one has to reflect upon the body one is for the body one has to come into existence.

Aside from acknowledging that the body is integrally mine and constitutive of my personal being, and so no mere appendage one possesses for clinical biomedical study, it is also important to acknowledge the personal meaning that can be revealed from such an appreciation of the body. Luijpen captures well the rich manifestation of meaning that results from the fusion of my body and conscious self:

My hand reveals itself as mine when I try to grasp an object; my feet manifest themselves as mine when I carefully place them on the steps of a steep staircase; my eyes disclose themselves as mine when I let my gaze travel over the world. My hands with which I grasp do not belong to the system of seizable things, such as my pen, my shoes, and my pack of cigarettes. My feet do not belong to the world that can be walked upon, and my eyes do not pertain to the visible world. They reveal themselves as meanings which lie on the side of the subject which I am. These meanings cannot be found in a textbook of anatomy or physiology, because “I” do not occur in such books.

But the “I” as the embodied conscious self who is always meaningfully in the world occurs resoundingly throughout the literature of phenomenology. While the emphasis of
different authors may vary and thus give rise to different modes of expression, the positive outcome remains the same as Cartesian dualisms are confronted and any particular attempts to devalue the body’s role are halted.

For his part, Husserl expresses the matter from a more epistemological angle. He focuses on the functioning of consciousness in its broad intentional sense in order to describe how the embodied conscious self is meaningfully in the world. Luijpen identifies Welterfahrendes Leben as the specific Husserlian term of choice to articulate this truth: “Being-[human] is being-conscious-in-the-world, it is ‘Welterfahrendes Leben.” Heidegger on the other hand, especially in his earlier phases, assumes a more ontological perspective and so readily discusses the being of the human person by use of the well known Dasein to capture the fusion of conscious self and body who finds herself meaningfully in the world.

Regardless of the different vocabulary that may be used, the phenomenological truism remains preserved: the distinctive human person as an “I,” “you,” or “s/he” finds identity and meaning as an embodied conscious self. It has been noted that Husserl’s wranglings with the mind-body dilemma had a significant impact on the way in which Heidegger eventually resolved the dilemma through the conceptual means of Dasein. What was it about Husserl’s approach to the mind-body issue that enabled him to so cogently address it in his own right and at the same time allowed it to be so influential upon the work of his successors? In other words, what is the basis for the phenomenological principle concerning the meaningful soul/body union that transcends the varied semantics by which it is expressed? The answer lies in one of the three formal
structures of phenomenology – the structure of parts and wholes. Sokolowski attests to
the prominence and pervasiveness of these structural forms in phenomenological method:

Three formal structures are present “everywhere” and appear “constantly” in Husserl’s philosophy: (a) the relationship between parts and wholes, (b) the contrast between empty and filled intentions, or between presence and absence and (c) the structure of identity in a manifold.\textsuperscript{75}

Sokolowski’s opinion is that an awareness of these forms will contribute greatly toward understanding how a particular theme is developed and explicated from a phenomenological standpoint. While it would be ideal to have more than a nodding acquaintance with each of these formal structures, the current discussion surrounding the unity of soul (mind) and body will be best furthered by paying exclusive attention to the relationship between parts and wholes.

How does the formal structure of parts and wholes lend foundational support to the being of the human person – whether expressed as Welterfahrendes Leben or Dasein – who is seen as a necessary and welcome unity of body and conscious self? The relationship between parts and wholes is developed by Husserl in his influential early work Logical Investigations (1900-01). While described as a “huge and unmanageable” book in two volumes, an awareness of its overall intent and structural flow makes it more approachable. Moran provides an overview when he discusses the nature and purpose of the six specific investigations comprising the book:

The six Investigations are concerned with [analyzing] the most basic elements which are required for any form of knowledge whatsoever…[more specifically they] are in-depth meditations on certain key concepts which Husserl thinks are required in any formal science for example…the relation of individual to universal, part to whole…\textsuperscript{76}

Husserl probes the logic of parts and wholes in the third of the six Investigations, and again Moran proves helpful by offering a contextual synopsis of what to expect: “The
third Investigation generalizes from the relation between instance and universal to produce a general formal theory of the necessary *a priori* relations specifiable between parts and wholes in general.” Barred by constraints of space and time, it is impossible to follow in close detail the case Husserl develops for parts and wholes; nonetheless, it will be beneficial and germane to the issue of the unity between body and conscious self to realize that the gist of his argument centers on the difference between pieces and moments. Because these various terms – parts, wholes, pieces, moments – retain a technical meaning as defined by Husserl, a brief overview will help to promote a better understanding of how this theory advances the body/conscious-self unity.

Husserl’s begins by claiming that wholes can be analyzed into two different kinds of parts: pieces and moments. Pieces are parts that can subsist and be presented even apart from the whole. Because pieces can be detached from their wholes, they can also be called independent parts. To clarify Husserl’s rather abstract theorizing, Sokolowski provides the example of a tree. A tree is a whole, while its trunk, roots, branches, leaves and bark are pieces. All of these pieces can be separated from their tree and still present themselves as independent entities. There are important phenomenological implications because a branch as a piece “presents itself.” Separated from the tree and no longer functioning as a living branch means that it is only a piece of wood. However, the branch as a piece can still exist and be perceived as an independent thing. As Sokolowski summarizes: “Pieces, then, are parts that can become wholes.”

The analysis then proceeds to distinguish pieces from moments. Unlike pieces, moments are parts that cannot subsist or “present themselves” apart from the whole to which they belong. In other words, moments are non-independent parts that cannot be
detached from their whole. Once again, Sokolowski’s examples concretize the explanation. Whereas the branch of a tree was cited above as exemplary of a piece, musical pitch and vision are put forth as instances of moments. Musical pitch cannot exist except as blended with a sound, nor can vision occur except as dependent on the eye. Therefore, unlike pieces as parts that can become wholes, moments are the kind of parts that cannot become a whole. “A branch can be cut off from a tree, but the pitch cannot be isolated from a sound and vision cannot float away from the eye.” Moments, therefore, are the kind of parts that cannot become whole and so separately presented to perception.

While on initial glance these distinctions may appear pedantic, from a phenomenological perspective they actually prove to be an effective prophylactic against a grave philosophical error. Sokolowski dubs this mistake a “cardinal one” and goes on to explain why:

The cardinal philosophical mistake, phenomenologically speaking, is to force an abstractum into being a pseudo-phenomenon, and so to base philosophy on the abstract meaning of words and not on things as they actually appear.

For certain, parts such as moments are abstracta, and should remain as such, whereas wholes and parts as pieces are concreta. In other words, a whole and a piece as an independent part can exist, present themselves and be experienced as concrete individuals. The branch as an independent part or piece, though separated from the tree, still exists and can be perceived as an independent thing. Moments as non-independent parts, however, cannot become concreta. Whenever they exist and are experienced they drag along their other moments with them, and so they exist only as blended with their complementary parts. For example, pitch cannot be by itself apart from sound, nor can vision exist without the eye.
All this becomes very blurred and the near occasion to commit the cardinal mistake of philosophy presents itself because of the imprecise nature of human speech and language. Even though Heidegger develops and promotes a high regard for the disclosive potential of language, at this point its ability to be a stumbling block must be heeded. No matter how emphatically it may be stated that moments as non-independent parts cannot be detached from their whole to which they belong, they nonetheless can be spoken about by themselves, as Sokolowski avers: “Although we can think or speak abstractly about certain moments, and simply not consider their necessary supplements and founding parts, we cannot think about such moments as capable of independent existence or presentation.”85 While it is advantageous that speech allows for abstracting and a moment can be referred to by itself, there is also a danger that speech will convey a separation when there is actually only a distinction:

we can speak about pitch without mentioning sound...we can talk about vision without mentioning the eye...because we can refer to a moment by itself, without mentioning its associated moments, we may begin to think that this moment can exist by itself, that it can become a concretum...
There is always a danger that we will separate the inseparable, that we will make the abstractum into a concretum, because in our speech we can talk about one moment without mentioning what it is founded upon.86

Husserl’s treatment of the mind/body question avoids the pitfalls brought on when the comfort and security of speech unwittingly erects unbridgeable separations instead of introducing nuanced distinctions between and among moments. Advancing the phenomenological motto – “to the things themselves” – is most palpable in this regard as Husserl admonishes: “we can absolutely not rest content with ‘mere words,’ i.e. with a merely symbolic understanding of words...we must go back to the ‘things themselves.’”87 To penetrate to the heart of the mind/body dilemma, Husserl would not
recommend purely a linguistic analysis, but rather a phenomenological approach focusing on the combination of moments associated with mind and body. Sokolowski states Husserl’s ambition well:

In his phenomenology he does not wish to analyze the meaning of words used when we intend something signitively and abstractly, but to describe how what is meant appears concretely in its actual presence, when all its moments must be taken into account.88

Indeed, Husserl follows his own advice as he specifically confronts the mind/body issue in his later writings. He does not allow the ability to speak abstractly about the mind and the body to compromise the underlying truth that these are distinct moments of a single individual. Taking account of the many operative moments associated with the mind/body dynamic, and so not being deluded by speech into analytical lethargy, allows Husserl another opportunity to confront Descartes and his dualistic tendencies. Woodruff Smith relates how Husserl’s concept of moments not only serves to bring clarity to the mind/body discussion, but also underscores in a different context the well established theme that phenomenology is always in a tension with Descartes:

whereas Descartes also distinguished the I or the res cogitans from the body or the res extensa, Husserl insisted that the “I” and the “body” are distinctive aspects (moments) of a single individual...Descartes held that no substance can have attributes of both thought and extension, so that no substance could be both a body and a mind. Husserl held to the contrary, that the same individual can be both spatial and thinking, that “body” and “mind” are not two kinds of individual[s] but two aspects or moments in one individual.89

True to the form of his more epistemological concerns, Husserl’s desire to nuance the mind/body unity as a distinction of moments rather than a separation of pieces comes across in an abstract and detached tone. However, this does not prevent the extrapolation of his thought for application in a foundational way to more anthropological and down-to-earth concerns. For instance, while to this point there has been a laxity in distinguishing among concepts like mind, conscious-self and soul when discussing their
relationship to the body, the human soul specifically and its rich connotations can be clarified by an appeal to phenomenology’s formal structure of parts and wholes. The first step in clarifying the nature of the soul is to show that it is not a separable thing that can be understood apart from its involvement with the body. While the manner in which the soul is a moment to the living body differs from the way mind is a moment to the body, Sokolowski is clear that “The soul is a moment; it bears an essential relation to the body and is founded on the body that it enlivens and determines and in which it is expressed. Human beings are animated bodies, not enmattered spirits.” As long as the general principles of parts and wholes are respected and their more specific delineations applied in regard to the mind/body unity, then the more anthropological prospects will be realized. Moreover, any misleading caricaturizations will be staved off that turn the soul into a piece (an independent part) and depict it as merely a vital force or thing that could exist, be presented and so understood apart from its organic base.

Sokolowski openly and proudly applies the theory of parts (pieces/moments) and wholes to the dynamics of the soul and body, thus greatly vivifying the typical Husserlian application to the mind/body quandary. Heidegger, on the other hand, extrapolates the theory in a very different manner. For instance, the fallout of Heidegger’s awareness of and respect for Husserl’s work vis-à-vis the mind/body problem was already noted as most influential upon the early project to “rechristen” the existence of the human being as Dasein. The qualitative unity of distinction, rather than a hard and fast Cartesian separation, means that Dasein is indeed a unitary phenomenon – a being-in-the-world – whereby there is no self without a world nor (by extension) is there ever a self without a body. Einar Øverenget is firmly convinced that despite Heidegger’s reticence to
adequately acknowledge his sources, the ability to analyze the structural make-up of
*Dasein* in *Being and Time* is heavily indebted to Husserl’s theory of parts and wholes and
its corollary of pieces and moments:

My claim is that by taking over these fundamental discoveries from Husserl he [Heidegger] helps himself to more of Husserl than one
might take notice of through a first reading of his texts...However, Heidegger himself displays a total silence when it comes to this
influence. Indeed, there is only one explicit reference to the very
distinction [between parts and wholes and pieces and moments] in
*Being and Time* and that takes place in a footnote in which nothing is
said about its importance for his own thinking.91

But the importance is unmistakable, especially with regard to the way in which
Heidegger preserves and nuances the hybrid unitary phenomenon of *Dasein*. In other
terms, in the ongoing polemic to fend off any sedimented separatist Cartesian
inclinations, the unity that Heidegger ascribes to *Dasein* is by no means a facile unity in
which *Dasein* is a slipshod cobbling together of various compounds:

*Dasein* is neither a combination (*eine Verkoppelung*) of behaviors nor a
composite (*ein Zusammengesetztes*) out of body, soul, and spirit,
whereby it would be futile to seek the meaning of the unity (*dieser
Einheit*) of this composite;...92

The counsel of seasoned Heidegger and Husserl translator Richard Rojcewicz
made it clear that “*Verkoppelung*” and “*Zusammengesetztes*” are the operative
expressions in this passage for better understanding Heidegger’s overall intent. These two
words are connotative land mines which meaningfully reveal Heidegger’s adoption of
Husserl’s theory of parts and wholes in order to precisely articulate the unique nature of
*Dasein* as a unitary phenomenon. By stating that it is not “a ‘combination’ (*eine
Verkoppelung*) of behaviors nor a ‘composite’ (*eine Zusammengesetztes*) out of body,
soul, and spirit,” Heidegger is hoping to avoid the negative tendencies of traditional
philosophical and theological anthropologies. These often advanced a meaning of unity
that emphasized inventorying the quantitative dimensions to the neglect of the more
qualitative aspects, thus compromising a true and comprehensive grasp of human existence:

How is the kind of Being which belongs to a person to be ascertained ontologically in a positive way?...It must face the Being of the whole man (ganzen Menschen), who is customarily taken as a unity (die Einheit) of body, soul, and spirit...When, however, we come to the question of man’s Being, this is not something we can simply compute by adding together those kinds of Being which body, soul, and spirit respectively possess...93

Terms such as Verkoppelung and Zusammengesetztes, however, are very complicitous in formulating uneven theories about the meaning of Dasein’s unity. Such theories are more quantitative and expediently superficial since Verkoppelung and Zusammengesetztes convey the more pejorative senses of unity and composite. In other words, Verkoppelung and Zusammengesetztes communicate a forced extrinsic unity that is valued because its various elements can be easily counted or measured. The imagery of Verkoppelung is especially redolent since it is often used to describe the process of tying together a group of animals, such as a team of oxen, whose resultant unity is one that is imposed and quantifiable.

In order to avoid repeating any excesses of philosophical or theological anthropologies that rest content with impoverished conceptions of the meaning of the unity of the human person, Heidegger will not use the more customary terms of body, soul, and spirit to advance a more accurate notion of this unity, even though he admits of their possible merit when distanced from the ploys of traditional usage: “In their turn ‘body,’ ‘soul,’ and ‘spirit’ may designate phenomenal domains which can be detached as themes for definite investigations...”94 To examine and properly appreciate the meaning of Dasein’s unity Heidegger opts to focus on the phenomena that he feels are structurally fundamental. While the exact nature of these various phenomena and the specific reasons
for Heidegger’s embracing them need not detain the current argument.\textsuperscript{95} it is nevertheless important to appreciate Heidegger’s adaptation of Husserl’s theory of parts and wholes as the necessary means to ground the very unity of \textit{Dasein} and to give the unique meaning of this unity its proper articulation.

This Husserlian influence is most apparent as Heidegger defends his strategy to discuss the distinctive unity of \textit{Dasein} by appealing to the various phenomena he believes comprise that unity. Otherwise, it could appear that he dismisses the more traditional anthropological expressions related to the elements of this unity only to then cosmetically reinstate them with a new garb of sophisticated jargon. Surely \textit{Dasein} is a unitary phenomenon, but this does not prevent an analysis of its structural components so long as the proper and well-established terminology is applied to these components. Here is where Husserl’s theory becomes invaluable to Heidegger’s objective.

In the interpretation of \textit{Dasein}, the structure is something “\textit{a priori;}” it is not pieced together (keine zusammengestückte), but is primordially and constantly a whole (ganze Struktur). It affords us, however, various ways of looking at the \textit{items} which are constitutive for it (konstituierenden Momente).

The compound expression “Being-in-the-world” indicates in the very way we coined it, that it stands for a \textit{unitary} phenomenon. This primary datum must be seen as a whole (Ganzen). But while Being-in-the-world cannot be broken up into contents which may be pieced together (zusammenstückbare Bestände), this does not prevent it from having several constitutive \textit{items} (konstitutiver Strukturmomente) in its structure.\textsuperscript{96}

At first sight it may appear that Heidegger is merely reiterating the unitary phenomenon of \textit{Dasein}, while giving permission that this unity may be further analyzed by its various structural elements. But careful attention to the precise terminology in the original German divulges that Heidegger is more profoundly specifying the nature of this unique unity by the good offices of Husserl’s theory of parts/wholes and the sub-theory of pieces/moments. The unity of \textit{Dasein} is not merely a quantitative “piecing” together
(Verkoppelung) or forced extrinsic compositing (zusammengesetztes) of various constitutive elements. Instead, it is a qualitative “momenting” that simultaneously allows the constitutive elements to be acknowledged and analyzed in their own right but also appreciated as contributing to the natural unique unitary phenomenon of Dasein:

Emphasis upon any one of these constitutive items (Verfassungsmomente) signifies that the others are emphasized along with it; this means that in any such case the whole phenomenon (ganzen Phänomens) gets seen.97

The Husserlian influence can be easily overlooked, especially if the examination of the above pertinent passages from Being and Time is restricted to only an English reading. The likely oversight results from the translation decisions made by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. While they use “stücke” and its various cognates to convey the notion of “piece” and “piecing” – (zusammengestückte, zusammengestücktbare) – they render the German “Moment” (Momente, Strukturmomente, Verfassungsmomente) and its cognates into the English term “item.”98 Thus the presence and power of the Husserlian contrast that could have been more readily detected if “piece” were seen in tandem with “moment” is easily lost. Øverenget bemoans this possibility and respectfully takes Macquarrie and Robinson to task for their unwitting role in advancing the commonly held opinion that Heidegger started out as a phenomenologist but ended up with a project that was entirely different from that of Husserl’s. To translate the German word Moment as “item” is a striking choice for Øverenget, since “according to The Oxford Duden German Dictionary, the term ‘item’ is not listed as a possible translation of the German ‘Moment.’”99 The selection of “item” for Moment could have been redeemed to some extent, in Øverenget’s estimation, if there would have at least been some acknowledgment of the weighty significance of Moment:
even if they [Macquarrie and Robinson] were to use the term “item” as a translation of “Moment” they should have stated that this is a translation of a term that is an important technical term in Husserl.100

That technical meaning conveyed by moment in relationship to piece, as previously outlined, states that moments are parts that cannot subsist or be presented apart from the whole to which they belong, while pieces are parts that can subsist and be presented even apart from the whole. Therefore, as Heidegger strives to promote the unique unitary phenomenon of Dasein in Being and Time, he obviously makes use of Husserl’s theory of parts/wholes and pieces/moments. Not only does he use Husserl’s very terminology, which may get smoke screened by translation choices, but he also uses the theory in accordance with Husserl’s conventions, as Øverenget explains: “‘moments’ or ‘constitutive moments’ are what they are by belonging to a whole and by doing so in a non-pieced together manner.”101

The Wandering Stranger-Poet: From Being-in-the-World as Dasein to Dwelling on Earth as a Mortal

The foregoing makes clear, once again, how extensive and crucial Husserl’s influence was upon Heidegger. As the early Heidegger approaches the question of the meaning of Being via a painstaking analysis of Dasein in the pages of Being and Time, the degree of Husserl’s impact is unmistakable. Heidegger’s understanding of Dasein as a unique unitary phenomenon owes its ultimate foundation and meaningful depth to Husserl’s theory of parts and wholes and his concerns over the mind/body problem. These influences carry over into Heidegger’s later interests, where despite a noticeable shift in emphases and different terminology, an overall continuity abides as Heidegger moves forward along the committed path to probe ever more deeply the question of the
meaning of Being. Such a variation in perspective that nonetheless keeps this ultimate
goal in focus was developed earlier when discussing how inhabiting the spatio-temporal
realm of the between of the ontological difference affords a great opportunity to advance
the meaning of Being. Most specifically, it was the poet, along with her poetic thinking,
who most authentically inhabits and experiences the vicissitudes of this between as pain.
For Heidegger, this finds precise expression in the poetry of Trakl, where the poet-
wandering stranger receives the call from Being to enter into and assume the pain
associated with the differing difference of the between, thus allowing her to approach
more closely Being’s mysterious depths.

But not only does poetic activity lend itself to grappling with the mysteries of
Being, it also was seen to have exciting potential in disclosing the mysterious depths of
the Deity in light of the peculiar challenges confronting the contemporary era as a “needy
time.” Since this sounds promising for the overall interest of this current study, it can be
asked why this chapter was sidetracked by such an extensive treatment of Heidegger’s
enchantment with the between. Out of respect for the priorities established by Heidegger
himself, it was certainly an acceptable and productive detour, since it is only by first
understanding the dynamics involved in the pained between of the ontological difference
as it applies to the disclosure of Being that any possible similar applications could be
seriously attempted in regard to the disclosure of the Deity during this needy between
time when the gods have fled and the gods have yet to arrive.102 As the exposition of the
ontological difference ensued the discussion centered on the experience of pain, so
expressed and experienced by the poet who willingly embraces the differing difference
between beings and Being (the ontological difference proper). To avoid any misguided
estimations of the poet’s pain it was important to fully grasp human existence as conceived by Heidegger. This resulted in appreciating the concept of *Dasein* – being-in-the-world – as a unique unitary phenomenon of an embodied self that is ever co-constituted by the world in which it is immersed. With this specific structural composite firmly established by a phenomenological method, Cartesian dualisms are eliminated, and the pain of the poet is richly appreciated as an experience suffusing her body and soul as well as interpenetrating her engagement with the world.

Therefore any hasty jump to the role of the poet and the power of poetry in order to discover how these later Heideggerian themes contribute to the theology of God is indeed reckless in both its launch and landing. The launch is more sure footed as long as *Dasein*, replete with all its phenomenological underpinnings, is seen as vivifying the poet and all her poetic activity. In different ways many have warned against making any precarious leaps that could compromise or even denigrate the staying-force that *Dasein* maintains throughout the entire Heideggerian corpus.

For instance, Robert E. Wood highlights the lynch pin effect that *Dasein* exercises for maintaining continuity as one traverses the various phases of Heidegger’s long career. Wood refers to six figures present throughout Heidegger’s works who exhibit six very different ways of life. He identifies these varying figures as the peasant, the artist-poet, the philosopher, the scientist, the man-on-the-street and the thinker. Whatever variety these characters add to the expression of Heidegger’s thought about Being, it is Wood’s belief that “Underlying them all is the notion of human existence as *Da-Sein*, as the *Da*, the ‘There’ of Being, the locus of concern for the whole of what-is and thus also for the whole of its own existence.”\(^{103}\) While these six figures may allow Heidegger some
literary license as he nuances his philosophizing, they nonetheless maintain a constancy since they are all at base expressions of Dasein. Therefore, even though the casting call may increase and become more diverse as Heidegger’s approach to the question of the meaning of Being continues to unfold, this should not spawn the interpretation that Dasein and its structural analysis have been eclipsed. If anything, it is a further testament to Dasein’s ability to allow the fruits of its analysis in Being and Time to adapt and so productively accompany Heidegger’s ongoing task.

Philp Buckley issues a more stern warning. He contends that any reading of Heidegger is an “amputation” approach which attempts to make him more credible in the eyes of postmodernity by scuttling the existential-phenomenological analysis of Dasein. For those coming at Heidegger from a skeptical postmodern perspective, the work of the early Heidegger on Dasein is severely restricted, if not completely irrelevant, because of its modernist bias to give primacy of place to the self, the subject. Buckley observes: “A frequently expressed view of Heidegger is that while Sein und Zeit [Being and Time] offers a profound critique of the Cartesian subject, the existential analysis of Dasein still remains within the bounds of a traditional or ‘modern’ view of the subject.”104 The rash solution, therefore, calls for a cutting off of the early gangrenous Heidegger to save the later Heidegger. In this way the modernist errors infesting Heidegger’s theory of Dasein cannot contaminate the poet and the poetic activity, which are more agreeable with the postmodernist mindset. However, Buckley conveys the real result of this aggressive procedure: “In its surgical brutality, however, this reading does away with all the phenomenological richness of Heidegger’s description of the life of the subject in Sein und Zeit.”105
As a less invasive tactic for moving into the later Heidegger and latching on to its more novel and promising features, Buckley recommends not an out-and-out rejection of the philosophy of subjectivity in Heidegger’s early works but rather an appreciation for the deepening of *Dasein* as subject that ensues. Beyond the purposes of this chapter, but pertinent to Buckley’s answering the charges of the postmoderns, are the notions of fluidity and self-displacement. That the subject is determined by displacing itself and fluctuating between the first-person singular and plural is not a novel insight that first arises in Heidegger’s later lectures concerning the poet of Hölderlin’s river poetry. Instead, this is a deepening and an expansion of the investigation of *Dasein* that originally took place in *Being and Time*. There the subject is determined as it displaces itself into an ongoing fluid dynamic between the “I” and the “we.”

Heidegger has therefore never posited a theory of human existence whereby the subject is granted the status of an enshrined, impervious monolith, so odious to the postmodern sentiment.

Cutting through this sophisticated argumentation and its possible merits in responding to the concerns of another audience, Buckley’s overall wisdom shines through for the current endeavor. It may be tempting to bypass the existential-phenomenological analysis of *Dasein* in the early Heidegger and move directly to his later treatment of human existence as poetic, a place more conformable with and exciting for agendas ranging from postmodernity to religion. There is, however, still an important continuity that must be acknowledged – the poet and the humanity to whom she poetically speaks are in essence deepened expressions of *Dasein*.

With all due respect given to the important and persistent influence of *Dasein* throughout all phases of Heidegger’s work, it is also widely accepted that a definite and
marked shift in emphases and style takes place when crossing over into his later period. One aspect of this shift demonstrates well the continuity that obtains as Heidegger’s preoccupation with the analysis of Dasein wanes and other figures such as the poet come to the fore to realize their many roles, including those that have greatest interest for theology. While initially the ability of this shifting to trace the course which moves from Dasein to poet to God is not readily obvious, it is hoped that the following argument will illuminate the course in a careful and cautious way.

The point of access, which allows for an eventual entry into what poetic discourse offers to the issue of God, is gained by first heeding the important place that the concept of “dwelling” (wohnen) assumes for the later Heidegger vis-à-vis human existence. Whereas Dasein, as the being which humans possess, was depicted in its utmost as being-in-the-world, Heidegger opts in his later writings to express this same deep existential immersion and involvement as dwelling. Kockelmans explains the ascendancy of dwelling in Heidegger’s thought as a natural progression instead of an inexplicable metastasis:

After Heidegger had described man as that being whose essence is to be in the world, and that man therefore is to be characterized as that being who stands out into the openness of Being which is the world, he finally came to conceive of dwelling as the specifically human way of being.107

It must be stated that the later Heidegger embraces the concept of dwelling in order to achieve many purposes. Julian Young provides a glimpse of Heidegger’s extensive and diverse use of dwelling:

Together with its [dwelling’s] cognates – homeland (Heimat), being/becoming homely (Heimischwerden/Heimischsein) – and contraries – homelessness, estrangement, alienation… – dwelling can plausibly be said to constitute the central topic of the thinking of the later Heidegger. 108
To point out and explain each of these various uses would be an impossible undertaking at this point; however, it is possible and beneficial to at least advance some appreciation for dwelling as it pertains to Heidegger’s well-known “Fourfold” (das Geviert). In fact for many scholars, an assiduous pursuit of the significance of Heidegger’s Fourfold unto itself has proved to be a suitable and productive means for breaking into the general meaning of the later writings, and most especially how these texts impact upon matters religious. This is understandable because of the way Heidegger presents the Fourfold. As his later conceptualization of the world, he insists that whatever world one encounters, and however that world in each case may be structured, it can always be understood in terms of four basic ontological regions: heaven, earth, gods and mortals. Robert Orr dubs these regions “four fundamental interpenetrating meaning-domains of world openness”; and Joseph Kockelmans corroborates this understanding with the following explanation:

The term fourfold, as well as the four terms heaven, earth, gods, and mortals, must be understood as being ontological in character; thus all semblance notwithstanding, they do not refer to ontic things, nor do they divide the totality of all ontic things into four basic sets of things. They express the fact that whatever has meaning ultimately means whatever it means, with respect to these four basic dimensions of Being, which…in a concrete form always manifests itself as world.

The analysis of Dasein as being-in-the-world, which nearly monopolized Heidegger’s early thinking, is now expanded with a new terminology that sounds potentially promising for theological endeavors, even when superficially heard by more skeptical ears. Dasein has given way to the mortal(s): “The mortals are human beings,” who are in the world, now expressed as the Fourfold. And while all this new nomenclature has a fresh and fanciful ring, it in no way usurps the conceptual depths already established by Heidegger’s Dasein as being-in-the-world. However, what is
undeniably tantalizing in the rhetoric of the Fourfold for any agenda seeking to forge a
dialogue between the later Heidegger and more theological concerns is its explicit
acknowledgment that the gods or the divinities (die Göttlichen) now have an important
role to play in the dynamic interplay between mortals (humanity) and the world.

At one time Heidegger was satisfied to describe Dasein’s existence as being-in-the-world, never conceiving the “inness” as a mere spatial location, but as an immediate and co-constituting relationship of reciprocity between Dasein and the world. The introduction of the Fourfold allows Heidegger to embellish this relationship between Dasein and world. Mortals are said to be in the Fourfold only when they “dwell” in accordance with the unique relational demands required by the three other regions – gods, earth, sky (heaven). As Vincent Vycinas explains: “earth and sky together with gods and mortals are the phenomena whose play bestirs a world, or rather whose play is world.”

When Heidegger explains the nature of this relationship, the theological prospects become even more promising, since there is a mark of necessity that encompasses the nature of the unity and interaction that obtains among the regions of the Fourfold. The earth, the heavens, the gods and the mortals are not united in a casual, happenstance gathering. Instead, the Fourfold is able to constitute the world only because the unity of its four regions mutually belong to each other in such a way that their playful interaction becomes a structural world where things can become what they are, and where human beings can live their lives. With eloquence worth quoting at length, Heidegger captures “the worlding of the world” (das Welten der Welt) that ensues as a result of the unique relational dynamic in and among the regions of the Fourfold.

When we say mortals, we are then thinking of the other three along with them...earth and sky, divinities and mortals – being at one with one another of their own accord – belong together by way of the
simpleness of the united fourfold. Each of the four mirrors (spiegelt) in its own way the presence of the others...This mirroring does not portray a likeness. The mirroring, lightening each of the four, appropriates (ereignet) their own presencing into simple belonging to one another...The appropriative mirroring sets each of the four free into its own, but it binds these free ones into the simplicity of their essential being toward one another.

The mirroring that binds into freedom is the play that betroths each of the four to each through the enfolding clasp of their mutual appropriation. None of the four insists on its own separate particularity. Rather, each is expropriated, within their mutual appropriation, into its own being. This expropriative appropriating is the mirror-play (das Spiegel-Spiel) of the fourfold. Out of the fourfold, the simple onefold of the four is ventured.

This appropriating mirror-play of the simple onefold of earth, sky, divinities and mortals we call the world.113

Reaching a consensus on the merit of Heidegger’s explanation of the event of the Fourfold from a perspective of logic or literary aesthetics could prove impossible, but it is easier to achieve widespread agreement that an unmistakable place is now granted to the gods/divinities in the establishment of the world and in the description of how all things are one in Being. The unanimity reached on this score has indeed been attractive to the more theological minded. For even if the utmost caution is exercised so that no sloppy or brash assertions are made reducing or equating Heidegger’s gods to the all-encompassing Supreme Being called God, there is still something compatible here with theism. Macquarrie is at once sympathetic to such compatibility and keenly sensitive to its fragility. As a result, he uses some carefully crafted phraseology to discuss the gods of Heidegger’s Fourfold and the specific expansion that this signals from the earlier Dasein as being-in-the-world:

What, for instance, does Heidegger mean by “the gods”?...It would be wrong to read into the expression “God” in a theistic sense, but the word “gods” does stand for what might be called a “divine factor” in all reality, something holy in which everything participates...in the philosophy that he develops in his middle years, he finds room within time and history for the divine and for the human spirit...
That Heidegger makes room in his later thought, in a most unspecified way, for a divine factor and something holy vis-à-vis the Fourfold could be license enough to rest content with the description of the gods that takes place there as the definitive point of contact for theology. Heidegger demonstrates a degree of consistency and reliability when discussing the gods in light of the Fourfold in two separate works of the early 1950s; and this does much to cultivate a dialogue with theology. He writes in “The Thing” (1951) and in “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1954):

The divinities (die Göttlichen) are the beckoning messengers of the godhead (die Gottheit). Out of the hidden sway of the divinities the god emerges as what he is, which removes from him any comparison with beings that are present.\(^\text{115}\)

The divinities are the beckoning messengers of the godhead. Out of the holy sway of the godhead, the god appears in his presence or withdraws into his concealment.\(^\text{116}\)

Moreover, as Heidegger develops his thought in the context of the latter quote, the conversation between theology and him seems unstoppable. There, he elaborates on the relationship between the gods and humankind, which is one of the necessary interrelations of appropriation-expropriation in the Fourfold stressed above as a mirror-play (das Spiegel-Spiel):

Mortals dwell (Die Sterblichen wohnen) in so far as they await the divinities as divinities. In hope they hold up to the divinities what is unhoped for. They wait for intimations of their coming and do not mistake the signs of their absence. They do not make their gods for themselves and do not worship idols. In the very depth of misfortune they wait for the weal that has been withdrawn.\(^\text{117}\)

But despite the many points that this and the preceding provide for establishing and maintaining a lively discourse between theology and Heidegger’s later concerns, their quick referencing of the gods actually short-circuits the more profound and sustained conversation that can take place when recourse is made to another dimension of the
mirror-play that occurs in the Fourfold – mortals and their dwelling poetically upon the earth.

The Phenomenon of Earth

The suggestion that the optimal and most grounded exchange between the later Heidegger and theology will ensue by shifting attention to the earth-mortal dynamic of the Fourfold could appear at first to be misguided, if not absurd. It would seem more than adequate that once Heidegger establishes in a general way that “Mortals are in the Fourfold by dwelling,” and then goes on to specify the peculiarity of the dwelling between mortals and the gods, that a rather straightforward access has been gained to a rich Heideggerian vein of theological treasure. While there is much that could be extracted from the assertion that mortals dwell in the Fourfold by waiting for the elusive gods, the potential for theology will realize more long-term positive effects if respect is paid to the integrity of Heidegger’s work overall. This will be accomplished by acknowledging that the more foundational interaction which takes place in the Fourfold is the dwelling of the mortals on the earth. Not only will this be the best means to preserve the continuity in Heidegger’s work, it will also act as a pivotal means to establish a continuity in this chapter, where an earlier emphasis was placed upon the realm of the pained between as the place where the distinctive work of the poet with regard to the Deity occurs. The poet effectively confronts the “needy” between time when the gods have fled and the gods have yet to arrive. First and foremost, however, it is necessary to show that Heidegger gives primacy to the interplay between mortals and the earth when
addressing the various interplays (mirror-plays) of the Fourfold throughout the later writings.

The previously referenced essay “Building Dwelling Thinking” offers important evidence of the privileged status given to the dwelling relationship between mortals and the earth. First given as a lecture in 1951, this essay arises at a time when a severe housing shortage still plagues a post-war, defeated Germany. But the kind of building that Heidegger discusses offers no immediate solutions to the lack of housing through novel architectural ideas or techniques of construction. The building that he has in mind is meant to stir deeper questions about human dwelling, as Michael Zimmerman observes:

The housing shortage was, for Heidegger, a concrete expression of a far more fundamental and serious problem – the homelessness of modern humanity. World War II, the proximate cause of the destruction of so much German housing, was itself a symptom of modern humanity’s disease of homelessness. We are not at home because we no longer understand who we are. One can live peacefully or dwell appropriately only if one knows, at some profound level, who one really is.¹²⁰

Heidegger proceeds in the essay to state who humanity really is: “To be a human being means to be on earth as a mortal. It means to dwell.”¹²¹ And in subsequent passages Heidegger reiterates the intricacies of human existence and dwelling, which in turn elevates the earth-mortal dynamic to a place of unrivaled prominence among the other members of the Fourfold and their various interactions. For instance, at one point in his efforts to urge a deeper notion of building, Heidegger exhorts that a careful listening to what the word “building” (bauen) says will reveal several aspects of meaning, such as, “Dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth” (auf der Erde sind).¹²² Furthermore, as he discusses the fundamental character of dwelling in another place, he
asserts that “human being consists in dwelling and, indeed, dwelling in the sense of the
stay of mortals on earth.”

While it is clear that the later Heidegger holds the mortal-earth dynamic in special
regard, it is not so clear at this point why this interaction is to be prized for theological
discourse over the other interactions of the Fourfold that seem valuable because of the
alluring terminology they invoke, i.e., the dwelling of mortals as they await the divinities
(gods). With the hope of avoiding any theological proof-texting of Heidegger, but at the
same time wanting to make some claim for theological relevance, every effort must be
taken first to plod patiently through his later writings to allow that which is consistently
thematic to be firmly established. This ensures that a dialogue with theology takes place
in a more grounded way from a Heideggerian standpoint. The first steps toward such a
grounded exchange have been taken already by establishing the thematic consistency in
the earth-mortal interaction in the Fourfold and foregoing the gods-mortal interaction,
despite its theological appeal on the surface.

To more firmly ground this exchange, the background of the earth-mortal
dynamic must also be shown. This will prevent proof-texting (or perhaps piece-mealing)
of another stripe, whereby interesting points are teased out of certain texts of the later
Heidegger as if they had no precedent in his earlier writings. This misreading of
Heidegger has been sternly avoided throughout this work by painstakingly digging
deeply into Heidegger’s earliest works to show that the basis for many of his subsequent
interests stem from his phenomenological formation. While such a far reach back is not
necessary in the current effort to establish the whence and wherefore behind the
hegemony of the earth-mortal dynamic in the Fourfold, it is still possible to discover its stirrings and foundational presence in the earlier phases of Heidegger’s later period.

Why does Heidegger attach more importance to the dwelling of mortals upon the earth than to the other dwellings that mortals must also achieve in the Fourfold? (“Mortals dwell in that they save the earth…receive the sky…await the gods…”124) The answer resides in Heidegger’s long-standing fascination with the concept of the earth (die Erde). Somehow the dwelling that the earth provides for mortals strikes at the very heart of true dwelling and thus addresses ultimately the deeper homelessness of late 20th and early 21st century humankind. In other terms, to arrive at the true essence of dwelling one must first fully appreciate what it means for humans to dwell on earth. Then, the further ways that Heidegger modifies this dwelling are able to be better grasped and widened for different purposes. For instance, in the section of this chapter titled “Openness to the Mystery as Openness to God” Heidegger’s nuance that “…poetically men dwell upon the earth…” will prove invaluable in forging a deep and lasting dialogue with theological issues relating specifically to God. This will be enhanced by re-visiting the role of the wandering stranger/poet who best experiences the pain of the between.

In attempting to better understand Heidegger’s curiosity for the earth, which provides the opportune place for mortals to dwell and thus offers the best way to appreciate dwelling in its fullness, it should be realized that even though earth’s precise meaning is hard to pin down, its appearance in the later writings gives Heidegger yet another mark of distinction as a philosopher. That the earth is a difficult concept best associated with the later texts is captured by Alberto Canán:

The term “earth” plays no imminent role in Martin Heidegger’s Being and Time at all; in fact Heidegger begins to use it only in the 1930s, it then becoming a proper concept. The concept thus belongs in the time
after the so-called “turning” (Kehre), and then it plays an obscure role.\textsuperscript{125}

Despite its ambiguity, Heidegger’s very willingness to embrace the concept of the earth and appreciate its metaphorical value for addressing philosophical concerns in a novel way is noteworthy and praiseworthy. Eager to offer Heidegger such due plaudits is Hans-Georg Gadamer, who stressed that Heidegger’s making the earth a theme of philosophical reflection was a genuine breakthrough in his own thought, as well as in philosophy as a whole. Kockelmans, who is responsible for pinpointing this Gadamerian insight, adds his own chorus to the ode of praise:

in the entire philosophical tradition since the days of Plato, the earth has never constituted an essential element of the great philosophies developed in the West. In this tradition, the earth has always been taken for granted as something which contains nothing worthy of being thought about. In Heidegger’s thinking, that is no longer the case.\textsuperscript{126}

**The Earthly Character of Artwork to Conceal and the Sheltering of Genuine Dwelling**

Heidegger breaks the long-standing philosophical prejudice against the earth, especially with regards to the illuminative worth that thinking about the earth sheds upon dwelling. Reflections in this vein appear in Heidegger’s thought for the first time in his 1935/36 lecture “The Origin of the Work of Art.” Here the overall aim is to mine the depths of the work of art in order to discover the essence of art within it. Because Heidegger chooses to gain access to the meaning of art by giving priority to the work of art instead of to the artist or the spectator, it becomes necessary to appreciate the basic thrust of what it means for a work of art to be a work or to possess a “workly” (das Werkhafte) character. This in turn will prove not to be an unnecessary sidetracking into Heidegger’s theory of art, but an important and expedient means for understanding the concept of earth and the genuine dwelling that takes place thereupon. Essential to this
understanding is a recognition that the contrasting roles played by world and earth are important for the work character of artwork.

To guide his discussion about what happens in the work-being of art, Heidegger avails himself of Vincent van Gogh’s painting of a pair of peasant shoes and asks, “What happens here? What is at work in the work?” For Heidegger, what happens when one is confronted with van Gogh’s painting is that it speaks the truth by disclosing what the shoes are:

This painting spoke. In the nearness of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be. The artwork lets us know what the shoes are in truth…Van Gogh’s painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, is in truth. This being emerges into the unconcealment of its Being.

And it is at this point in the work of art – by being a work – that the role of the world becomes paramount. According to Heidegger, if the peasant shoes (as a particular being) through the “workly” nature of the painting are allowed to stand in the light of their Being, then artwork opens up in its own revelatory way the Being of beings and does so in a world which provides the ultimate context for an unobstructed and clear manifestation:

A work, by being a work, makes space for that spaciousness. “To make space for” means here especially to liberate the free space of the open region and to establish it in its structure…The work as a work sets up a world. The work holds open the open region of the world.

Art, therefore, by virtue of being a work, lets things appear as they really are and openly displays this moment of truth in a world. However, it will be recalled that for Heidegger truth is aletheia. This means that while disclosure, transparency and unconcealment are apt expressions of what takes place in any event of truth, they only partially grasp the totality of the event. Aletheia also acknowledges that hiding, opacity
and concealment are equally valid occurrences in moments of truth. Art as a specific conveyer of and participant in truth must incorporate both senses of *aletheia*. The sense of unconcealment was clearly put forth in the preceding discussion, where art, in its workly character, was said to allow things to emerge as they really are in an unencumbered spacious staging area known as a world. World, then, becomes the representative concept for the disclosure and illumination that takes place in an artwork. So much for one sense of *aletheia*, but how does Heidegger incorporate the other sense? Heidegger searches for and finds in the concept of “earth” the antithetical representative concept that best conveys the concealment and darkness that also happens in a work of art. By counterposing world and earth Heidegger is able to consistently express his “*alethic*” notion of truth as it occurs in works of art. A necessary “strife” (*der Streit*) takes place between the worldly work character of art and its earthly work character. But as Heidegger states, this tempestuous relationship is welcome and necessary to preserve the integrity of truth conveyed in art as a work:

> The setting up of a world and the setting forth of earth are two essential features in the work-being of the work… The opposition of world and earth is strife. But we would surely all too easily falsify its essence if we were to confound strife with discord and dispute, and thus see it only as disorder and destruction. In essential strife, rather, the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion of their essential natures.130

The essential nature of the work-being of art was appreciated above for its ability to set up a world where van Gogh’s painting of peasant shoes could be clearly beheld in spacious openness. But now the essential nature of the “setting forth of earth” that is also part of the workly character of art must be given its due. According to Heidegger, the imagery of earth is able to capture and convey the more closed and hidden aspects that abide in any artwork: “The earth is essentially self-secluding (*Sichverschließende*). To set
forth the earth means to bring it into the open region as the self-secluding." Thus, artwork opens up a world and simultaneously allows the earth to display itself as earth – as something concealed:

Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate it...The earth appears openly cleared as itself only when it is perceived and preserved as that which is essentially undisclosable, that which shrinks from every disclosure and constantly keeps itself closed up.

The implication of earth’s dogged impenetrability is an invitation from Heidegger to be at home with the hidden (the immeasurable, the ungraspable) that is nonetheless “there” but in a different or less obvious sense. It is not as if art as a work in its earthly aspects slams a door in the face of the beholder, but rather it allows room for mystery. The reason that this could rub those of a more modern temperament as a rude exclusion is that the earthly power in art to suggest mystery is not as comfortable as the worldly power in art to display something as it is in the wide open. Heidegger sees this uncomfortableness as another instance of the encroachment of the scientific and technological attitude upon the realm of art, which should otherwise be a natural haven exempt from such scrutiny. An attitude dominated by a narrow scientistic-technological bias would be more comfortable if the truth conveyed by art remained in the illuminated worldly openness, where the work appears as it plainly is and so can be readily controlled, evaluated, quantified and dismissed – “used up” (verbraucht) according to Heidegger. However, the introduction of the complementary earthly closedness of art disallows any such immediate and exhaustive encounter:

Earth shatters every attempt to penetrate it. It causes every merely calculating importunity upon it to turn into destruction. This destruction may herald itself under the appearance of mastery and of progress in the form of the technical-scientific objectivation of nature, but this mastery nevertheless remains an impotence of the will.
The encounter with art that its earthly character strives to foster is one that sees its impenetrable aspects as an exciting opportunity rather than a frustrating obstacle. The excitement stems from the immeasurable depth and moreness exuded by any work of art as earthly. Returning to Heidegger’s reflections on van Gogh’s painting of the peasant shoes gives a clear indication of the exciting truth potential of art in its more earthly dimensions:

As long as we only imagine a pair of shoes in general, or simply look at the empty, unused shoes as they merely stand there in the picture, we shall never discover what the equipmental being of the equipment in truth is…A pair of peasant shoes and nothing more. And yet—

From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles stretches the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls…This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining worry as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbirth and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the earth… Art will not realize the opportunity to speak in this way if the wrongheaded notions of earthly as strictly delimiting and restrictive go unchallenged. Thus Heidegger offers the following challenge:

The self-seclusion of earth, however, is not a uniform, inflexible staying under cover, but unfolds itself in an inexhaustible (eine unerschöpfliche) variety of simple modes and shapes. To be sure, the sculptor uses stone just as the mason uses it, in his own way. But he [the sculptor] does not use it up…To be sure, the painter also uses pigment, but in such a way that color is not used up (nicht verbraucht) but rather only now comes to shine forth.

The functioning of the concept of earth as expressed in a work of art is therefore not under the direction of some miserly evil genius who derives a certain level of satisfaction by stingily and arbitrarily barring access to what otherwise would be a full and complete artistic encounter. Instead, the earthly aspect, in a more positive and constructive manner, acknowledges that something very real abides and is being
conserved in any experience with a work of art, though it remains hidden and unavailable to perception.

Heidegger’s choice of words to describe this more purposeful earthly concealing as “preserving,” “sparing,” and “sheltering” has the greatest bearing on furthering the understanding of dwelling, which was the original intention for delving into his study of art. Kockelmans’ reflections capture the important nuance that erupts when sheltering is seen as complementary to the concealing that takes place in the earthly character of artwork:

Earth does not mean here a certain mass of mater or a planet. Earth is that toward which the emerging brings back and shelters everything that emerges. In everything that emerges, the earth co-emerges as that which abides and gives shelter.136

Earthly concealing, in order to spare and conserve the less apparent depths of the artwork, is thus a show of respect for limitless interpretive possibilities. The stone or the paint which the artist plies to create a final rendering never fully exhausts or uses up (nicht verbraucht) the fullness of meaning available to subsequent beholders. When van Gogh rendered the pair of peasant shoes he used paint and canvas to capture the visual image of a pair of well-worn work shoes. This is immediately apparent when looking at the painting. However, because of the ever operative earthly aspect in any work of art, the paint and the canvas are not able to use up or deplete all the profundity that can be possibly conveyed through these shoes. Instead, these media converge to shelter the unseen woman who wears these shoes so that her “slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind,” her “uncomplaining worry as to the certainty of bread,” her “wordless joy of having once withstood want,” her “trembling before the impending childbirth” and her “shivering at the surrounding menace
of death” can gradually and slowly emerge with an awe inspiring force that surpasses the immediate perceptual contours offered by the painting.

It is Heidegger’s hope that such prospects for a gradual unveiling of the powerful mysterious depths residing in the earthly character of any artwork will tantalize not only the art enthusiast, but will also be enticing in more general terms to all humanity which he sees as homeless and in search of authentic dwelling. Almost two decades after his reflections on art, Heidegger specifies the essence of this authentic dwelling as a “sparing,” a “preserving,” a “sheltering” – Schonen: “The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving” (Der Grundzug des Wohnens ist dieses Schonen).137 However, the magnitude of this later assertion, repeated twice in refrain-like manner, and the specific contextual ramifications it has for furthering the understanding of the mortal-earth relationship in the Fourfold, are firmly established by the familiar claim of the earlier essay on art: the earthly character in any work of art must be appreciated for its tenacious ability to spare, to preserve, to shelter (Schonen) the more profound meaning emerging slowly and guardedly for the patient beholder, who values and welcomes the work as pregnant with endless depth and mystery. Heidegger is optimistic that those who resonate with this earthly sheltering of art will in turn freely accept it as the guiding principle in their own efforts to seek genuine shelter and so dwell authentically: “Earth is that which comes forth and shelters (Sie ist das Hervorkommend-Bergende). Earth, irreducibly spontaneous, is effortless and untiring. Upon the earth and in it, historical man grounds his dwelling in the world.”138

Regardless of how Heidegger may later expand the notion of authentic dwelling, his earlier ruminations upon art establish the important and far reaching connection
between shelter, as it pertains to protecting, preserving and respecting mystery, and shelter as it applies to being at home with mystery. The special status which Heidegger accords to the mortal-earth dynamic of the Fourfold, discussed earlier, now reaches a defining moment. If dwelling is the manner in which (the comportment by which) mortals are on the earth, and the fundamental character of dwelling is Schonen – a sparing, preserving, sheltering of the mystery – then mortals do not so much as dwell authentically at a particular spatio-temporal region called the earth, but rather willingly embrace the unknown with a sense of awefilled expectation. To underscore the placelessness of this earthly dwelling, Michael Haar consistently designates earth as “Earth.” This signals to his readers that Heidegger’s sense of earth surpasses physical location to provide a level of comfort and at-homeness for true dwelling:

we have had recourse to a capital letter to emphasize the nonfactual, non-geographic, non-planetary character of the Earth as the place of rootedness capable of proffering, given an epoch and world, a nonhistorical possibility. Written with a lowercase letter, “earth” simply designates the earth as a planet.139

Despite the fact that Heidegger wants to encourage a conceptualization of earth or earthiness which goes beyond a certain mass of matter or planet with precise spatial coordinates, his very choice of the word “earth” (die Erde) to convey that which shelters mystery is immediately suggestive of dwelling in its more obvious sense – the at-homeness or rootedness that humanity only experiences with the earth. There is a range to the human experience of being-rooted upon the earth, and a phenomenological description is an excellent way to present this range in its fullness. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, translator of Karol Wojtyła’s (Pope John Paul II) The Acting Person and founder of The World Institute for Advanced Phenomenological Research and Learning, articulates an aspect of this range by first describing the more familiar and obvious
experience of rootedness. Here the earth provides a dependable base of operations for human projects:

Our seemingly most direct “contact” and experience of the earth comes from our experience of living “upon” the earth. We walk, we build, we establish our dwelling, whether in a cavern or in a building and surround it with a garden; we plant crops, trees, and flowers; we cultivate the surface of the soil; we dig up precious minerals and stones. In one word, “upon” the earth entails a primordial sensing, feeling, conviction of the solidity, the indisputable solidity of the earth upon which we stand, upon which we may rely in all our ventures.140

Beyond the experiential solace that comes from the rootedness that only the earth can provide as terra firma which gives a reliable grounding and spacious platform for human endeavors, there is also a more subtle rootedness consistently provided by the earth that is likely to go unnoticed and so unappreciated. Nevertheless, it is this experience of rootedness upon the earth that pervasively sustains human existence in a more fundamental way. Though this experience of the earth is less palpable and so cannot boast of a tangible solidity to demonstrate its degree of rootedness, it is still determinative of life on earth in a powerfully hidden way. Tymieniecka dubs this vital and invisible rootedness a unique “genetrix” which transcends rootedness as earthly solidity. The latter, as seen above, gives an actual ground for human projects, while the former provides all that is necessary for the ultimate grounding of the human project:

The expression “life on earth” tells it all: our body, flesh, physiology, and sensing, our ways of securing our unfolding in life and our subsistence, our generation, corruption, and extinction. All these in all their particular features we have in virtue of earthly powers, energies, seminal virtualities, potentialities, and dynamics.

And all these perdure in specific artistically measured and coordinated articulations that form a unique network within which we originate, unfold, subsist, and vanish from the scene. It is no wonder that we call earth our genetrix.

This is a unique genetrix. It holds dominion over the span of our existence. Although the articulations by which it maintains and controls our route remain invisible, hidden, mute…

Earth in its otherwise mute interplay with our faculties and their employment brings our entire existence to the scene of life…we deploy from this interplay our special passions, the vital passions of our existence within the earthly conditions, confines, rules.
Our vital passions of the earth are, on our experiential side, most deeply rooted within our interplay with the earthly existential conditions. They constitute the existential gist of our being.141

Tymieniecka allows her phenomenological colors to show after reading these two descriptions of the experience of being-rooted. Whether describing the rootedness upon the earth that culminates in the more obvious sense of solidity or in the less apparent sense of genetrix, the full range of this experience, from one end of the spectrum to the other, is teased out by respectfully allowing the expression “upon the earth” to realize its descriptive force. As Tymieniecka set out to describe the representative extremes of experiential rootedness, she merely pitched her lead expressions – “living upon the earth” and “life on earth” – and allowed their evocative power to resonate fully and freely with the possibilities of human experience.

Most specifically, the expressions “living upon the earth” and “life on earth” evoked the important sense of being rooted and exposed the various degrees and depths of this experience in relationship to the earth. This could only take place with a phenomenological description, since an ordinary description merely litanies the special features that a particular phenomenon possesses. A great value to an ordinary description is that the enumerated features used to describe a phenomenon like “life on earth” will strike a chord of agreeable recognition with anyone living on the earth. At the same time, however, this undercuts the power of the earth unto itself to manifest the experiential dynamics of rootedness. This reassigns and restricts any potential for disclosure to the province of the individual subject, who after engaging in a more or less private cognitive venture to arrive at a list of essential characteristics to explain “life on earth” can then share these features with others who will concur, since these same obvious traits will appear to anyone living on earth. By contrast, a phenomenological description respects
the manifestational power of the phenomenon itself. Therefore, the phenomena of earth
and life on that earth unto themselves convey and foster a sense of rootedness, as well as
a sundry of other possible experiences, without seeking approval from human estimation
as the final arbiter of what life on earth really means. Sokolowski fine-tunes the contrast
between ordinary description and phenomenological description:

A theory of phenomenological description must set this issue
straight…it must allow us to recognize our place in the world and the
world’s power of manifestation…When I carry out a transcendental,
phenomenological description, I describe an object [phenomenon] not
in terms of special features that it has, but in terms of the ways in which
it can be experienced. I describe the modes of experience and the
modes of presentation, not the contents of what is presented.142

When there is a willingness to embrace the rigors of a phenomenological
description, there is a simultaneous acknowledgment of humility. No longer is what can
be determined only from the human perspective seen as the definitive and final appraisal
of the encountered phenomenon, i.e., living upon the earth. Instead life on earth is
allowed to present itself from the vantage point of the earth, and as it does so it will attain
heights of manifestation that will surpass the formulations of life on earth derived
exclusively from the confines of human reasoning. This exercise in humility occasioned
by the phenomenological description does not lead to an impoverished humiliation
because the locus of manifestation shifts from the thinking subject to the phenomenon
itself. Rather, this recentering is a nudge away from a narrow solipsistic view and an
invitation to greater affinity with the phenomenon itself so that unprecedented discovery
will ensue. Sokolowski claims:

when we carry on a phenomenological description we are with the
objects [phenomena] and not merely with our own sensibilities or our
own ideas…when we enter this descriptive stance; we become aware of
more of the world.143
Another contemporary phenomenologist, Amedeo Giorgi, specifies the precise nature of this “moreness” that awaits discovery when a phenomenological description is pursued. Giorgi’s life’s work is dedicated to advancing psychology as a human science rather than a natural science. The need to pay careful attention to the value of the phenomena directly impacting upon the human person led him to champion phenomenological description for qualitative empirical psychological research. It is not merely a generic moreness that is encountered as the various phenomena that enfold human existence are described. Instead, the description specifically leads to an acquaintance with moreness as something hidden and mysterious:

by adopting a strictly descriptive approach, we can let the phenomena speak for themselves, and when we do, we discover that whatever appears suggests in its very appearance something more which does not appear, which is concealed.\footnote{144}

The Affinity between Humanity and Mystery

Now in returning to Heidegger, no explicit attribution is given to phenomenological description as the enabling force behind his thoughts on earth. Nonetheless there are clear indications that the phenomenon of the earth occupies a privileged position to the degree that it acts as the point of continuity and source of cohesion for everything that he advances with respect to dwelling and being-rooted. This was seen in “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1954) where Dasein (being-in-the-world) gave way to mortals who dwell upon the earth, and the nature of that dwelling was defined as sparing and preserving (Schonen). The full implication of this was appreciated when recourse was made to an earlier essay, “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1935/36). There earth was said to be that aspect of any artwork which preserves its more elusive or
hidden dimensions so that meaning is revealed slowly and carefully but never to the point of depletion.

If the phenomenon of earth is allowed to speak unencumberedly as that which provides the dwelling for a humanity of preservers and shelterers, and at the same time provides art with the capacity to preserve and shelter its treasured depths, then it becomes quite apparent that an abiding affinity exists between humankind and that which is concealed or hidden – mystery. This connection is established only if the earth, as it appears throughout the Heideggerian corpus, is respected as a phenomenon with immense manifestation potential. The best way to realize the important aspects of this manifestation is by submitting the experience of earth to a phenomenological description. This will unleash its moreness in a twofold way: first, as the true dwelling place of mortals who dwell essentially insofar as they shelter and protect; and secondly as the prerogative of any work of art to shelter and protect in a reverential regulatory fashion the manner and degree by which its endless subtleties of meaning are disclosed.

Heidegger articulates the continuity and cohesive force of earth by means of a verse that enchants him in the poetry of Hölderlin: “Full of merit, yet poetically, man / Dwells on this earth.” Heidegger calls this verse as well as four others “key” in any effort to arrive at a sense of the essence of poetry and the identity of the poet. To that end, in the 1936 lecture “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry” Heidegger assembles these five key passages from their various occurrences throughout Hölderlin’s writings and submits each one to an interesting commentary.

As Heidegger begins critiquing the verse concerned with poetic dwelling, he proffers the following definition: “‘to dwell poetically’ means to stand in the presence of
While its mention of the presence of gods is most attractive and seemingly pertinent to the overall purpose of the current project, it is more important at this point to forego the definition’s initial appeal and focus instead on the verse itself. Later, there will be a closer study of the theological possibilities contained in this verse. For now, the verse is to be appreciated at face value because of its keen synthetic ability to gather everything that has been said about dwelling, rootedness, sheltering and hiddenness, and re-center it on earth with a very meaningful refinement – “poetically man dwells on earth.” Indeed, earth is where mortals dwell as shelterers and preservers; and earth is also constitutive of any work of art to ensure that something remains hidden and ineffable in any sculpture or painting. But as Heidegger embraces the Hölderlinian distinction that humans dwell poetically upon the earth, the centripetal force of earth receives new momentum. Earth now becomes the focal point for dwelling, sheltering and concealing as something poetic.

Less obvious, yet of even greater significance, is the ability of this poetic modification to deepen the suggested affinity that exists between humanity and mystery. Once again, this is fully appreciated only if there is a willingness to resist the many temptations held out for theological speculation by Heidegger’s quick definition of poetic dwelling – “to dwell poetically’ means to stand in the presence of the gods and to be struck by the essential nearness of things” – and move instead to what he does in another context. A different poet is invoked who directly addresses the human connection to mystery that is most pronounced when humans dwell on earth with such a heightened sense of rootedness that they cannot help but act as stewards (shepherds) who shelter and preserve. In October 1955 Heidegger was invited to speak in his hometown of Messkirch
(Baden-Württemberg) at a commemoration to mark the 175th birthday of another native son, composer Conradin Kreutzer. For this occasion Heidegger felt that the words of Johann Peter Hebel (1760-1826), an Allemanic short-story writer and dialect poet, were most apropos:

We are plants which – whether we like to admit it to ourselves or not – must with our roots rise out of the earth in order to bloom in the ether and to bear fruit.147

He uses this quote near the beginning of his speech and again in closing. It is therefore thematic of the message he hoped to convey originally to the townsfolk who played a role in his formative years.

This keynote speech would come to be known as the “Memorial Address” and gave Heidegger another opportunity to revisit the theme of dwelling previously touched upon in his 1951 lecture “Building Dwelling Thinking.” As specifically mentioned above, one concern of this earlier lecture was the deeper homelessness of modern humanity and the resultant need for redress in order to achieve authentic dwelling. The message to his kith and kin a few years later strikes a similar chord, but does so in a way that more clearly implicates the role of the earth in fostering the relationship between humanity and mystery. Not only is humankind homeless, but it has also lost its very foundation and roots because of the hubris and arrogance that characterizes much of the dominant technological attitude in the late 20th century. In accepting the invitation to speak at a proud and festive moment in the life of his hometown, Heidegger returned to his literal roots and saw an auspicious occasion to exhort others on the necessity to recapture their roots in the more profound and pervasive sense of again being-rooted and so better enabled to dwell authentically.
In order to make such a proposition appealing, Heidegger points to the composer being fêted and suggests that Kreutzer’s artistic achievement was attributable, in great part, to his being-rooted:

What does this celebration suggest to us, in case we are ready to meditate? Then we notice that a work of art has flowered in the ground [soil] of our homeland (aus dem Boden der Heimat)…

We grow thoughtful and ask: does not the flourishing of any genuine work depend upon its roots in a native soil (die Verwurzelung im Boden einer Heimat)?

Before quickly dismissing this as just another instance of Heideggerian provincialism, it must be seen in the light of the Hebel verse Heidegger deemed thematic, which is the immediate context in which he intended this invitation to be read. Hebel wrote:

We are plants which – whether we like to admit it to ourselves or not – must with our roots rise out of the earth in order to bloom in the ether and to bear fruit.

Jeffner Allen, who has devoted careful study to Heidegger’s often overlooked enthusiasm for Hebel, maintains that the best way to really get a hold of Heidegger’s predilection for this particular passage is by paying close attention to Hebel’s use of the concept of earth. She arrives at this conclusion after examining Heidegger’s use of the quote throughout the “Memorial Address,” as well as in the closing lines of the 1957 opusculum, Hebel—Der Hausfreund. Referring to the quote Allen remarks:

If we take Hebel’s statement as our guide, we may turn first to the image of the earth. In so doing, we may view our own becoming as intertwined with that of the earth in which we are rooted and from which we arise, for the earth houses us. The earth bestows on us that space in which our historical being is founded and unfolds – in which we may come to be “at home.”

Allen’s comments about Hebel’s earth and its capacity to ground and house humanity bear a close resemblance to A-T. Tymieniecka’s insights cited earlier. Her phenomenological description of the experience of earth gave way to the optimal sense of dwelling for humanity, in both obvious and less obvious ways. But now the concern is
with not being rooted as opposed to homelessness, and so Heidegger’s concern for the plight of humankind vis-à-vis earth can be observed to follow a progression of severity. At one point, he is alarmed at the condition of homelessness which blights humanity as a result of inauthentic dwelling upon the earth. Later the condition worsens, since the very ability for humans to be rooted on the earth is threatened. Before there can be hope for dwelling that will lead to a sense of being at home there must first be the opportunity for a more fundamental rootedness in the earth.

Attaining such a fundamental sense of being-rooted will be a formidable challenge, due once again to the entrenchment of technological prowess which has already delivered and will continue to deliver devastating blows to human rootedness. Thus, Heidegger finds Hebel’s admonition telling and poignant because his use of metaphor, in which human beings are plants, helps to underscore vulnerability and the serious implications that rootedness has for survival as well as flourishing – “We are plants which…must with our roots rise out of the earth in order to bloom in the ether and to bear fruit.” The context of the “Memorial Address” where Heidegger repeats this phrase is disturbing to some and becomes the basis for their charges that Heidegger is parochial and merely advancing the cause of German superiority. After all, Heidegger is delivering a speech in his hometown to honor a successful composer who also hailed from that town; and he is greatly aided in his presentation by the poetry of Hebel – yet another artist of Black Forest heritage. Even though a marked provincialism abounds as Heidegger refers to the wisdom of Hebel and credits Kreutzer’s compositional achievements to his abiding sense of rootedness upon the earth, it must be borne in mind that Heidegger is capitalizing on the mood of the audience present at the ceremony. As a
result, he specifies the place of rootedness upon the earth that enabled Kreutzer’s artistic accomplishments as that of his native soil – his literal homeland in Germany’s Black Forest. Despite this rhetorical adjustment by a sensitive orator, the importance of earth unto itself as consistently used by the later Heidegger must not be lost. In other terms, it was much more appealing to the first listeners present at Heidegger’s key note address, as well as it would be for those who would subsequently read it, if the merits of heeding the rather abstract invitation to be rooted on the earth were first appreciated in a more tangible experience, such as the unique sense of being rooted in a specific spot of the earth – one’s native soil or homeland (der Boden, die Heimat).

As Heidegger’s reflections ensue in the “Memorial Address” it becomes clear that he transcends the limits of any narrow parochialism or nationalism. Immediately after citing the Hebel verse he asks in very general terms: “Is there still a life-giving homeland in whose ground [soil] man may stand rooted, that is be autochthonic?”¹⁵⁰ The provisional attempts at an answer to this general question also come through in very broad terms: “the rootedness, the autochthony (Bodenständigkeit), of man is threatened today at its core!… The loss of autochthony springs from the spirit of the age into which all of us were born.”¹⁵¹ Therefore it is not just the fear that a sense of a transient rootlessness will afflict the younger townspeople of Heidegger’s Messkirch if they choose to live somewhere else besides Germany’s Black Forest. It is rather the specter that a more profound rootlessness from the earth, already plaguing humankind in the commercialized, industrialized, urbanized West, will only worsen to the degree that technology continues to permeate and influence every aspect of human existence. Haar affirms this stance when he writes:
“The native” encompasses a greater meaning than the Earth where we are in fact born. The native soil is not a Boden, a ground of biological, purely vital rootedness. Heidegger formally rejects this meaning…and he thereby rejects the [Nazi] racist ideologies of “Blut und Boden”…

Heideggerian dwelling is not founded on a mysticism or a magic of the factually native place. The native is neither patriotic nor political, nor purely geographic nor linked to the singular charm of a place: it is the “home” [Heimat] which, though being completely spontaneously given, keeps asking to be chosen, adopted.\(^{152}\)

However the ability for humankind to freely seek and obtain a deeper sense of rootedness, and so be truly at home upon the earth, is thwarted by “the spirit of the age” which imposes its own comprehensive agenda: “The power concealed in modern technology determines the relation of man to that which exists. It rules the whole earth.”\(^{153}\) Despite the rather ominous tone cultivated by Heidegger’s estimation of technological dominance to severely inhibit humanity’s potential to ever achieve authentic rootedness, he is still a person of hope. While the threat of technology to continue to uproot and disenfranchise humanity is very real, it is Heidegger’s advice not to villainize technology to the extent that it is something that people of the late 20\(^{th}\) (and 21\(^{st}\)) centuries must completely avoid or abandon – that would be nothing more than an unrealistic and pious hope. The following remarks are clear that his message of hope is realistically balanced and attainable. Humanity can still be authentically rooted and also be part of a technological culture:

For all of us, the arrangements, devices, and machinery of technology are, to a greater or lesser extent indispensable. It would be foolish to attack technology blindly. It would be short-sighted to condemn it as the work of the devil…We can use technical devices as they ought to be used, and also let them alone as something which does not affect our inner core. We can affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and, also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste our nature.\(^{154}\)

The challenge thus becomes to believe that a rootedness can be established and maintained which will allow human beings to cohabitate with technology without letting
its ethos penetrate to the depths of their being and so determine the shape of their hearts. Heidegger is hopeful because he believes in the possibility of a new rootedness for humanity which will affect a compatibility with technology while at the same time offering a meaningful counterpoint. In a spirit of hope he asks:

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\text{even if the old rootedness (die alte Bodenständigkeit) is being lost in this age, may not a new ground and foundation (ein neuer Grund und Boden) be granted again, a foundation and ground out of which man’s nature and all his works can flourish in a new way even in the atomic age?}^{155}
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As Heidegger ponders the possibility of humanity’s re-rootedness to a level that will allow it to flourish in a time when the formidability of technology has necessitated new rootedness, it is clear why the imagery of Hebel’s poetry guides and frames his thoughts – “We are plants which…must with our roots rise out of the earth in order to bloom in the ether and to bear fruit.” Hebel’s delicate plant, which is vulnerable to a variety of forces, can only hope for survival and flourishment if it is first deeply rooted in the soil of the earth [Boden]. Likewise, the innermost core of humanity is fragile. Its heart as a tendril is prone to being washed away or choked off by an imposing technological enterprise. However, Heidegger asserts that humankind will be empowered to withstand technology’s forces and protect its heart because there will be a restored sense of rootedness. This will be achieved by meditative thinking: “What could the ground and foundation be for the new autochthony [rootedness]? …This way is the way of meditative thinking (Nachdenkens).”^{156}
Meditative Thinking: Openness to the Mystery and 
Restored Rooted Dwelling

The topic of meditative/essential thinking arose in chapter one by way of contrast with calculative thinking. This contrast illuminated Heidegger’s well-known concept of the “step-back” (Schritt zurück), which he saw as crucial for philosophy’s new beginning. While the contrast between meditative and calculative thinking resumes in earnest throughout the “Memorial Address,” it need not be revisited. Such an excursion would only divert attention from the more pressing matter at hand to secure the rootedness that will ensure humankind’s thriving in a technological world. A more direct move is called for, one that will lead squarely to an understanding of what meditative thinking entails.

Orientation to this direct route is greatly facilitated by John M. Anderson, who co-translated the “Memorial Address” with E. Hans Freund. After struggling to render an English version of the text, Anderson’s privileged insights are most helpful. They lead unswervingly to the specifics of meditative thinking and also ward off any false accusations that Heidegger’s recommendation was a facile solution open to an elitist (if not gnostic) few:

It is evident that he [Heidegger] finds meditative thinking to be a difficult and cryptic enterprise, even if it is also one of which every man is capable. Indeed, he exhorts us to have the courage and persistence which are necessary to think in this way. To think in this way, he states that we will require two uncommon attributes, two stands which man can take; …157

What, then, are the requirements of this meditative thinking that will ultimately lead humanity to a restored and relevant sense of rootedness? According to Heidegger, the requisite comportment is a releasement toward things and an openness to the mystery:

Releasement toward things (Die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen) and openness to the mystery (die Offenheit für das Geheinmis) belong together. They grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a
totally different way. They promise us a new ground and foundation
(einen neuen Grund und Boden) upon which we can stand and endure
in the world of technology without being imperiled by it.

Releasement toward things and openness to the mystery give
us a vision of a new rootedness (eine neue Bodenständigkeit) which
someday even might be fit to recapture the old and now rapidly
disappearing rootedness in a changed form.\(^\text{158}\)

Before engaging in a more detailed consideration of the dynamics of meditative thinking,
it is wise to maintain a sense of bearing. This comes with the realization that no matter
how esoteric Heidegger’s assertions may initially sound, they nonetheless speak directly
to an alleviation of the rootlessness that blights the existence of the contemporary person.
Again, the thought of Anderson is heeded in order to maintain this bearing: “Heidegger
somewhat relieves the cryptic character of these attributes [of meditative thinking] by
showing their relevance to human life, by showing that…rootedness depends upon such
thinking.”\(^\text{159}\)

Turning now to a closer examination of the attributes of meditative thinking –
releasement toward things and openness to the mystery – it will be noticed that an
exercise of discretion is afoot, since in the pages that follow a more extensive treatment
will be given to the latter attribute. This is by no means an arbitrary selection, but one
that is purposeful and expedient. There is also no attempt by this selectiveness to demean
the conceptual import of releasement toward things, since the concept of releasement
(Gelassenheit) unto itself is readily recognized as a favorite Heidegger mainstay in
several places of the later writings. A testament to its weightiness and potential for
greater study is reflected in the remarks of Michael Zimmerman: “As John D. Caputo and
Reiner Schürmann have demonstrated, Heidegger’s concept of releasement
(Gelassenheit) resembles the Christian mystic Meister Eckhart’s concept of releasement
(Gelâzenheit).”\(^\text{160}\)
The very mention of Meister Eckhart and the possibility of yet another conceptual link between him and Heidegger is indeed an exciting prospect that would readily complement a connection discussed in chapter one between the mystic and the philosopher concerning the “heart’s core” (der Herzensgrund). However, space does not allow for a fully developed presentation that would do justice to Heidegger’s releasement and its Eckhartian lineage. Thus only the second attribute of meditative thinking – openness to the mystery – will be given a thorough development.

Openness to the mystery will prove to be a multifaceted conceptual gem able to refract light effectively in many directions. In one direction, it will illuminate the more immediate concerns surrounding Heidegger’s concept of earth, his distress over dwelling and rootedness, and the noted affinity between humanity and mystery. In another direction, light will expose openness to the mystery in its broader relief as yet another expression contributing to the overall Heideggerian agenda – the pursuit of the meaning of Being. All of this illuminative potential will permit the current chapter to draw to a close in proper fashion. But before openness to the mystery as a posture to be assumed by meditatively thinking humans can be justly prized on any account, it is first prudent to entertain what Heidegger means by mystery in the context where such openness to it is being exhorted.

It comes as no surprise that Heidegger’s discussion of mystery in the “Memorial Address” revolves around the issue of technology. He is certain that there is a meaning to technology, but it is a meaning that eludes any easy or quick apprehension: “The meaning pervading technology hides itself.”161 This is not to say that the meaning of technology is impenetrable and so beyond human comprehension. Aspects of the meaning can be
grasped, for as much as the true essence of technology remains aloof, it also attempts to
forge a relationship with humanity. And it is through this elusive contact that a better
understanding of and appreciation for technology can eventually take place. In
Heidegger’s words:

If we explicitly and continuously heed the fact that such hidden
meaning touches us everywhere in the world of technology, we stand at
once within the realm of that which hides itself from us, and hides itself
just in approaching us.¹⁶²

This verbiage should have a very familiar ring, since it reverberates with
Heidegger’s assessment of the nature of Being itself. It was in chapter one where
Heidegger’s respect for the acuity of Heraclitus’ insight that “Being loves to hide itself”
became an important refrain in the ongoing efforts of philosophy to realize another
beginning and a radical possibility away from metaphysics. Only the philosopher who
willingly “steps back” and meditatively ponders the defaulting and concealing nature of
Being will be truly attuned to the call of Being, and thus be on the vanguard of Western
philosophy’s dire need of reorientation and rejuvenation. Being reveals itself but only
while simultaneously concealing itself, and so “Being remains mysterious.”¹⁶³ Heidegger
is convinced that an unprecedented encounter with Being and a privileged access to its
truth and meaning await any philosopher who accepts, rather than spurns, this mysterious
quality of Being:

Correctly thought, oblivion, the concealing of the as yet unrevealed
essence (in the verbal sense of essential unfolding) of Being, shelters
untapped treasures and is the promise of a find that awaits only the
appropriate seeking.¹⁶⁴

Addressing in this way, while withholding itself in default, Being is the
promise of itself. To think to encounter Being itself in its default means
to become aware of the promise, as which promise Being itself “is.” It
is, however, in staying away; that is to say, insofar, as there is nothing
to it.¹⁶⁵
Heidegger now urges a similar disposition when confronting technology. For as much as it is part of contemporary existence, and so not as seemingly abstract as Being, technology nonetheless exhibits the same dynamic trait with any efforts to apprehend its truth and meaning – it simultaneously reveals and conceals itself. The invitation is no longer confined to a limited audience of professional philosophers seeking to gain understanding about the etherealities of Being, but is now extended to all people of good will who must meaningfully integrate the ubiquitous presence of technology with their lives. Not only is Heidegger’s appeal more down-to-earth by the very composition of the intended audience and their matter of concern; he is also more direct in his description that it is none other than mystery (das Geheimnis) that humanity is called to encounter and relate with whenever the truth and meaning of technology is at once being revealed and concealed:

That which shows itself and at the same time withdraws itself (sich zeigt und zugleich sich entzieht) is the essential trait of what we call the mystery (das Geheimnis). I call the comportment which enables us to keep open to the meaning hidden in technology, openness to the mystery. 166

But just as Heidegger is lavished with praise for being more down-to-earth and forthright, a first glance at his assertion concerning the comportment of openness to the mystery seems to indicate a return to the abstract. The comportment is now said to provide access to the meaning hidden in technology. Heidegger, however, readily redeems himself in the ensuing paragraphs as he spells out the extent of the comportment’s inclusiveness. To adopt the comportment of openness to the mystery is not to embark on some narrow venture that will eventually lead to cracking the deep secrets of technology. This would be too melodramatic and restrictive. Instead, those who are willing to adopt a comportment of openness to mystery will be enabled to live in right
relationship with technology, because this comportment allows for the possibility of regaining a sense of deep rootedness and a concomitant genuine dwelling. Heidegger’s familiar words cited earlier to introduce the requirements of meditative thinking now express their full meaning, since the requirement of openness to the mystery is better appreciated as the ultimate basis of rootedness and dwelling:

Releasement toward things and openness to the mystery...grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way. They promise us a new ground and foundation upon which we can stand and endure in the world of technology without being imperiled by it.

[They] give us a vision of a new rootedness which someday even might be fit to recapture the old and now rapidly disappearing rootedness in a changed form.¹⁶⁷

If being open to the mystery is the best comportment for recapturing rootedness and dwelling upon the earth, then the deep and abiding affinity that exits between humanity and mystery becomes clearer. Mystery is closer to the human project than realized! To the degree that one is open to the mystery – hospitable to the dynamic of revealing and concealing – not just in technology but in all meaningful encounters, then one will dwell on earth with a deep and extensive rootedness (autochthony). Mortals who dwell rootedly on the earth do so only as friends of mystery.

**Openness to the Mystery as Openness to God**

This connection that Heidegger advances between human dwelling rootedly on earth and openness to the mystery invites cautious speculation along religious lines. In strict Heideggerian terms, mystery pertains to the back-and-forth flow of revealing and concealing that is experienced when striving to apprehend the meaning and truth of any encounter, ranging in magnitude from something as ultimate as Being to something as specific as technology. But with such an expansive range of possible encounters, what is
to prevent applying the workings of Heideggerian mystery to the notion of God? It goes without saying that without much difficulty the standard theological categories used to discuss God’s mysterious capacity to simultaneously draw near and withdraw would nicely dovetail with Heidegger’s convictions that truth and meaning are always sought after by the inner workings of a tandem between revelation and concealment. Most specifically, the ideas of God’s immanence and transcendence come to mind, where immanence is associated with the nearness of God to humankind and transcendence conveys God’s remoteness with regard to human concerns. Instead of trying to draw such explicit parallels, it would be more respectful to both the discipline of theology and Heideggerian philosophy to be a bit circumspect. In other words, instead of quickly making a connection between Heidegger’s revealing/concealing dynamic accompanying the varied searches for meaning and truth with theology’s assertions about God’s activity, it is more manageable and less contentious to see in Heidegger’s comportment of openness to the mystery a broad based appeal to make room for, or at least be open to the possibility of, the presence of the Holy, the Sacred, the Divine – God. In this way the bounds of propriety are maintained, since that which is more properly the province of theology is not transgressed and the integrity and continuity of Heidegger’s intentions are preserved.

It is now clear that one of Heidegger’s consistent concerns in the later works is to address and offer redress for the loss of genuine human dwelling, which in fact has denigrated into a condition of utter rootlessness. Humanity is no longer able to dwell rootedly upon the earth, but a glimmer of hope that there can be some reversal to this unfortunate state of affairs lies in the ability to foster and embrace a comportment, a
manner of being, which is receptive to mystery. For humans to dwell authentically once again and to re-attain true rootedness means that they must also welcome mystery. Without making any careless claims that Heidegger is engaged in some narrow agenda of unconscious evangelizing, he is nevertheless acknowledging the role played by something godlike when he advances an openness to the mystery and couples this with the promise of a restored dwelling and rootedness.

However, access to matters religious is never direct in Heidegger, and the current context is no exception. As Heidegger anguishes over humanity’s loss of dwelling and its no longer being rooted firmly on the earth as a result of the rise of technology’s influence, it is his hope that the perils offered by this ever growing influence can be confronted, and dwelling and rootedness reestablished, so long as people willingly opt for an existential comportment that allows room for mystery. Whether or not such openness to the mystery means openness to God in a specific theistic sense is not certain. However, what is undeniable is Heidegger’s conviction that the paramount need to recapture authentic dwelling and rootedness is enabled by a spirit receptivity to that which is ineffable.

The following observation by Frank Schalow not only highlights the Heideggerian correlation between the revival of rooted earthly dwelling and openness to the mystery, but also ventures a bold assertion about the specific outcome of this correlation. This proves the wisdom of being tentative with regard to the theological ramifications of openness to the mystery:

To appeal to the earth, to humanity’s autochthony (Bodenständigkeit) [rootedness], is to help draw the boundaries in which mortals can dwell in proximity to the gods. Indeed, humanity’s cultivation of this place (Ort) of dwelling accompanies the possibility of any experience of the Sacred.
It is not merely the posture of openness to mystery that neatly terminates in cause-effect like fashion with a new sense of dwelling rootedly at home upon the earth. Instead, being open to the mystery is the prompting that initiates the process of cultivating the eventual establishment of rooted dwelling. Heidegger himself uses provisional words like “possibility,” “promise” and “vision” to stress the embryonic capabilities of openness to the mystery: “[it] grant[s] us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way… [it] promise[s] us a new ground…[it] give[s] us a vision of a new rootedness…” 169

Once the inaugural impetus of openness to mystery is heeded and the course is laid out for the ever greater realization of rooted earthly dwelling, then, according to Schalow’s bold assertion, comes the added prospect of an experience of the Sacred.

While Schalow is to be credited for enunciating Heidegger’s connection of openness to the mystery and humanity’s rootedness, as well as the deeper implications latent in the connection, it is actually a tried and true tenet of the later Heidegger that genuine dwelling (at its utmost) is somehow always associated with the Divine. To fully appreciate this, however, it was necessary to proceed in the manner traced out above. It is only by grasping the urgent need for a technologically sophisticated humanity to regain a rooted dwelling upon the earth as properly inspired by an attitudinal openness to the mystery that places in proper and firm perspective any direct Heideggerian discussion of the Divine. So as tempting as it was, there was a concerted effort to avoid glomming on to openness to the mystery and trying to extract from it a facile link between the later Heidegger and theology. Openness to the mystery was a theological intimation at best, and only so because it was bound up with the more consistent Heideggerian concern for humankind’s dwelling rootedly upon the earth. Only when this priority is recognized, and
Heidegger is seen to be somewhat satisfied that the agenda of genuine dwelling has been addressed, is it then possible to appreciate how more theological issues appropriately arise, including the question of God.

The *locus classicus* where this priority is established is in those instances where Heidegger is found mulling over the implications of Hölderlin’s expression “Full of merit, yet poetically, man / Dwells on this earth.” Mention was already made of Heidegger’s discussion of this passage in the 1936 essay “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry.” There the suggestion was made to bypass the potential theological points that unfold as Heidegger specifies the meaning of poetic dwelling, and to concentrate instead on the verse’s ability to convey the central role played by the phenomenon of earth to promote authentic dwelling and restored rootedness. At this point, however, it is fitting to return to Heidegger’s definition of poetic dwelling and entertain the most blatant theological issue that it engenders: “‘To dwell poetically’ means *to stand in the presence of the gods* and to be struck by the essential nearness of things.”

Again, as was the advice offered very early in the chapter (section 1), when it comes to Heidegger’s discussions surrounding the poetic there is no need to rashly dismiss him as irrelevant or inconsequential for theology simply because he loosely uses a litany of terms to discuss the Deity – gods, the Holy, God, the Sacred, the Divine. In the instance at hand Heidegger remains true to form. Immediately after upholding Hölderlin’s declaration that humankind dwells poetically on earth, Heidegger is quick in the essay to explain that such dwelling automatically involves a relationship with “the gods.” Despite the just criticisms that could be leveled from more mainstream theological quarters, as long as Heidegger’s choice of words to invoke the Deity in this particular
context is allowed to stand, then there is still ample opportunity for theological speculation. For instance, it becomes a point of great curiosity why Heidegger, in an almost reflexive way, connects some of his more overarching later concerns – the poetic and human dwelling – with an experience of the Deity. Heidegger, however, offers no further explanation throughout the essay that might otherwise slake any curiosity surrounding the connection.

In fact, there would be no relief in the offing until 15 years later in the early 1950s when Heidegger presents another lecture on Hölderlin. The curiosity that arises after reading the 1936 work where Heidegger first touches upon the notion of the poetic human dwelling is justified, since Heidegger himself is motivated by his own fascination with the topic to give it the further reflection it is due. Eugene Kaelin comments: “So convinced was Heidegger of the force of this poetic statement [Full of merit, yet poetically, man / Dwells on this earth] that he dedicated an entire lecture to its message.” On October 6, 1951 Heidegger delivered a lecture at Bühlerhöhe entitled “…Poetically Man Dwells…” in which he dialogues with Hölderlin about the significance of this phrase from his later poem “In Lovely Blueness.” Space does not permit this study to travel down the many exciting avenues opened up by Heidegger’s decision to capitalize on the Hölderlinian belief that humankind dwells “poetically.” Nor is it necessary to reiterate all that was said at the outset of the chapter about the nature of poetizing and the special role of the poet in this “needy time.” Instead, an exclusive focus on the aspect of the poetic will best serve the current interests to continue to build upon the Heideggerian penchant for a humanity renewed by a sense of regained authentic dwelling/restored rootedness, and also to attend to any related theological concerns.
Véronique Fóti, who has written extensively on Heidegger and the poetic, provides just the right focus with the following observation: “The power of the poetic word, for Heidegger, is above all its capacity to bring about a healing of human homelessness.”

As Heidegger begins (and concludes) this essay devoted to the meaning of human poetic dwelling, he is certain of the capacity and promise of the poetic word to ameliorate the current dismal state of unrooted inauthentic dwelling. He writes:

the phrase “poetically man dwells” says: poetry first causes dwelling to be dwelling. Poetry is what really lets us dwell (Dichten ist das eigentliche Wohnenlassen).

When the poetic appropriately comes to light, then man dwells humanly on this earth.

The question then becomes, what is it about poetry and the efforts of the poet that allow dwelling to realize its utmost potential? Or to pose it differently, when and how does the poetic reach the necessary level of effectiveness to bring about the condition of true human dwelling rooted firmly upon the earth? In short, the specific capacities of poetry are being sought.

The Poetic Measure of the Human-Divine Encounter

Heidegger responds to these questions and substantiates his claim that the poetic is the basic capacity for human dwelling by his conviction that poetry has the ability to take measure: “The taking of measure is what is poetic in dwelling. Poetry is a measuring (Dichten is ein Messen).” To best understand how the poetic measure-taking capability of poetry effectively recaptures and restores authentic rooted dwelling, it is first necessary to respect what Heidegger envisions as true measuring. And Heidegger himself is fully aware that arriving at his sense of measure-taking will prove challenging, since the kind of measure that is taken in poetry by the poet varies drastically from the more
standard quantitative understanding of measuring. This latter understanding is emboldened by the very technocratic complex that has severely threatened the contemporary person’s ability to ever again achieve authentic rooted dwelling upon the earth. Thus it is an interesting irony that in order to address this threat by recourse to the power of the poetic, there must be a concomitant effort to reappropriate the way in which the very tools and concepts best associated with technology are used.

Heidegger indicates in the essay currently under consideration that the measurement-taking of poetry varies from the usual understanding of measurement as a calculable entity, since it is more than “measuring rods and their number.” He delineates the contrast with much more compelling and comprehensive force in the Zollikon Seminars. Intermittently from 1959 to 1969 Heidegger conducted a series of seminars with students of medicine and psychiatry. A more challenging demographic could not be provided for him to contrast his phenomenological notion of measuring with the reigning natural scientific model:

If scientific research and its theme – nature – is characterized by measurability, then we have an insufficient concept of this measurability if we believe that it is merely a matter of acquiring some definite numerical statement.176

The insufficiencies which mark this sort of measuring can be overcome, according to Heidegger, if there is first a willingness to recognize on a very general level that all measuring is not necessarily quantitative. Once this is granted then the more specific implications for human existence can be appreciated, since the relationship of the human being to measuring is also not exclusively comprehended as something calculable.177 To illustrate this Heidegger subjects the German messen to various verbal reworkings, which
in turn conveys a deeper meaning beyond the mere numbers gauging the dimensions of space:

> Whenever I take notice of something as something, then I myself have “measured up to” (an-messen) what a thing is. This “measuring-up” (Sich-anmessen) to what is, is the fundamental structure of human comportment toward things.¹⁷⁸

For the human person who therefore engages in this more profound experience of measuring, the result is a meaningful encounter to the extent that a right relationship is forged with whatever is or may be encountered. But for Heidegger, the spectrum of these encounters ranges from the more mundane, which take place during daily interactions with physical entities (“things” as cited above), to the more sublime that occurs with the awareness of participating in the vastness of a surrounding and sustaining reality or presence: “The relationship of the human being to what gives a measure is a fundamental relationship to what is. It belongs to the understanding of Being itself (Seinverständnis).”¹⁷⁹

With this understanding of measure-taking in mind, it is possible to return to the 1951 essay and better grasp Heidegger’s belief that poetry measures. He expresses this belief emphatically, which in turn exposes the far reaching effects of this activity: “In poetry the taking of measure occurs. To write poetry is measure-taking understood in the strict sense of the word, by which man first receives the measure of the breadth of his being.”¹⁸⁰ Commenting on the definitive nature of the poetic measure-taking and its profound consequences, J. Glenn Gray states:

> Poetry is “in a strict sense a measure or a standard by which man receives the measure for the width of his being.” Poets alone can teach us our limits…their words are not simply arbitrary; they are neither subjective nor objective but a true standard of man’s situation in time and in the midst of nonhuman realities. Such utterance is the voice of Being itself…They teach us to dwell rightly on earth, to make a home instead of merely inhabiting a series of houses…”¹⁸¹
Human beings are allowed to dwell rootedly on the earth because the poet takes an efficacious and comprehensive measure of this encounter which establishes the right relationship and the most fitting comportment possible.

What is it about the poet and her poetizing labors that enables her to tap into the powerful forces of true measure-taking and achieve for humankind the ultimate comportment which rehabilitates genuine dwelling and rootedness? An answer comes by paying careful attention to the immediate context of Hölderlin’s poem in which the thematic phrase “Full of merit, yet poetically, man / Dwells on this earth” appears:

24 May, if life is sheer toil, a man
    Lift his eyes and say: so
    I too wish to be? Yes. As long as Kindness,
    The Pure, still stays with his heart, man
28 Not unhappily measures himself
    Against the godhead. Is God unknown?
    Is he manifest like the sky? I’d sooner
    Believe the latter. It’s the measure of man.
32 Full of merit, yet poetically, man
    Dwells on this earth. But no purer
    Is the shade of the starry night,
    If I might put it so, than
36 Man, who’s called an image of the godhead.
    Is there a measure on earth? There is
    None.

The immediately preceding verses, 27-31, are the most telling, since they disclose Hölderlin’s broad belief concerning the measure-taking performed by humankind in general: “man / Not unhappily measures himself / Against the godhead.” Commenting on these lines Heidegger writes:

It is enough, then, if we attend to the poet’s own words. For in the next lines Hölderlin inquires, before anything else and in fact exclusively, as to man’s measure. That measure is the godhead against which man measures himself.182

Heidegger is thus intrigued by Hölderlin’s insistence that humankind has always measured itself with and against something greater – “something heavenly.” But what is most significant for Heidegger is that this lofty measure-taking impacts upon the state of
humanity’s dwelling. The comportment of genuine rooted dwelling that is currently sorely lacking can be realized anew, only if there is first some deep engagement with the relational encounter between humanity and the godhead:

The godhead is the “measure” with which man measures out his dwelling, his stay on the earth beneath the sky. Only insofar as man takes the measure of his dwelling in this way is he able to be commensurately with his nature. Man’s dwelling depends on an upward-looking measure-taking…

However, the attainment of authentic dwelling further depends on the poet who most naturally assumes the upward-looking posture needed to take the measure that puts the human-divine relationship in proper order. It must be borne in mind that the genuine rooted dwelling that Heidegger hopes humankind will recapture is a poetic one – “poetically man dwells on earth” – and for this to be realized the poet must be allowed to exercise her special charism to measure humanity’s relationship to the godhead, which in turn determines the best disposition for the human-divine encounter. All of this occurs metaphorically by the poet’s upward glance to “the sky,” which for Heidegger is synonymous with gazing upon God who can be “known” or experienced in this encounter, but only in a mysterious way. Thus, Heidegger places a lot of stock in Hölderlin’s insight concerning the nature of God by whom humanity measures itself:

Is God unknown?
Is he manifest like the sky? I’d sooner
Believe the latter. It’s the measure of man. (In Lovely Blueness, vss. 29b-31)

Hölderlin’s predilection for the imagery of the sky as the primary focus for the measure-taking endeavors of the poet allows Heidegger to apply once again his well-known dynamic of revealing and concealing, which occurs in any quest for truth (aletheia) and instills such pursuits with an element of mystery:

the sky is not sheer light. The radiance of its height is itself the darkness of its all-sheltering breadth. The blue of the sky’s lovely blueness is the color of depth. The radiance of the sky is the dawn and
dusk of the twilight, which shelters everything that can be proclaimed. Because the sky is an expressive realm where the revealing promise of dawn’s light and the looming concealment of dusk’s dimness ebb and flow in harmonious accord, it becomes an apt metaphor for the activity of God which is also marked by episodes of revealing and concealing. Heidegger describes the correlation between the sky and God’s activity which serves to define measure-taking and specify its scope:

The measure consists in the way in which the god who remains unknown, is revealed as such by the sky. God’s appearance through the sky consists in a disclosing that lets us see what conceals itself, but lets us see it not by seeking to wrest what is concealed out of its concealedness, but only by guarding the concealed in its self-concealment. Thus the unknown god appears as the unknown by way of the sky’s manifestness. This appearance is the measure against which man measures himself.

It is therefore not a literal looking toward the sky that determines the measure-taking performed by the poet in order to ensure an authentic rooted dwelling for humanity. Instead, it is a willingness to appreciate the sky as the cosmological staging area for both daytime’s revelatory brightness and the night’s concealing darkness, and to perceive how this is symbolic of a God who is mysteriously encountered as illuminating presence as well as obscuring absence. The tentative nature of the previous discussion on “openness to the mystery” is now appreciated for its preparatory value. The earlier general admonition to be attitudinally open to mystery in an unspecified sense offered the promise for a new dwelling and rootedness. Partial meaning and truth about the mystery would also result, since any disclosure occurs along with concealment. Now the discussion focuses on poetic measure-taking. Here, the poet artfully measures the human-divine relationship with full acceptance that the experience of God in these encounters will include disclosure as well as concealment. Heidegger, therefore, laid the necessary
foundation with the initial broad appeal that authentic dwelling and rootedness will come to those who willingly embrace mystery as an occurrence of simultaneous disclosure and concealment. With that set forth, greater specificity is given to the human quest for genuine rooted dwelling. Such a dwelling is now deemed poetic – “poetically man dwells on the earth” – for it is the poet who is able to create this dwelling by being open to the mystery that results from her unique aptitude to take the measure of the nature of the human-divine encounter. This is ultimately a coming to terms with and being acceptant of a God who relates to humanity by showing herself – “letting us see” – but never in an absolute manner. As the encounter unfolds God is not completely revealed or fully grasped by the human gaze.

The degree to which humanity is willing to be comfortable with this mysterious measure taken by the poet will determine the extent to which it will achieve rooted dwelling. In other words, there must be an engagement with the divine – “a measuring with and against the Godhead” – that fully and willingly embraces the mystery of these experiential encounters. Expressed as appearances, these encounters are respected as being guarded from complete exposure and able to withstand any attempts, no matter how valiant, to wrest what remains concealed out of its concealedness. Such a haughty pursuit of manipulation and domination is not a poetic measure of the human-divine experience, but is actually characteristic of the very technocratic spirit of hubris that led to the dissolution of human dwelling and rootedness.

Despite the salutary outcome promised by poetic measure-taking, when humankind will again dwell rootedly on the earth with full acceptance that such dwelling
means being compatible with an elusive Godhead, Heidegger admits that the poet’s measuring efforts will be disconcerting for many because of their “strangeness:”

A strange measure (ein seltsames Maß), perplexing it would seem to the common notion of mortals, inconvenient to the cheap omniscience of everyday opinion, which likes to claim that it is the standard of all thinking and reflection.

A strange measure for ordinary and in particular also for all merely scientific ideas…

Some would find corroborating evidence to substantiate the claim that this measure-taking is in fact strange or odd since it was originally inspired by Hölderlin, whose mental and emotional decline is well documented. His poem “In Lovely Blueness,” which has been under close scrutiny, was written between 1822-24. This is several years after his condition had reached a decisive low point in 1806, when he was transported by force to Autenrieth Psychiatric Clinic in Tübingen and released after nearly ten months of unsuccessful treatment. Awareness that some of Hölderlin’s most intriguing work was created during the advanced stages of his schizophrenia was never a problem for Heidegger. He talks quite openly and candidly about Hölderlin’s “madness,” as evident in the following remark: “Hölderlin spoke long after he had been taken away into the protection of the night of madness.”

Instead of being unsettled by Hölderlin’s serious mental illness and avoiding his strange teaching, Heidegger was enamored with Hölderlin and willingly accepted his specific thoughts on dwelling and measure-taking. In a way that neatly summarizes what has been discussed above with regard to dwelling and measuring, and at the same time shows Heidegger’s unflinching devotion to Hölderlin, Karsten Harries writes:

Following Hölderlin, Heidegger calls human dwelling poetic and links such dwelling to a measuring…

But where does the poet find or take this measure? Following Hölderlin, Heidegger gives us what appears to be the traditional answer: the most fundamental measure of human being is the Godhead.
If so, human beings must affirm the Godhead as their measure if they are to dwell authentically.189

Heidegger’s allegiance to Hölderlin is not based sheerly on the shock effect that might result from his endorsement of the unique wisdom that can be acquired from someone adjudged to be mentally unsound. Nor is his eagerness to follow Hölderlin a sign of malcontention. There is something much deeper that motivates Heidegger and leads him to seriously believe that the strange measure-taking advanced by the poetic is the worthy remedy to cure humanity’s lost sense of dwelling rootedly on the earth. For Heidegger the “madman” is not merely a debilitated person to be patronized or shunned, but rather someone who should be followed because he has a unique intuitive awareness that can point out new directions which otherwise will go unnoticed. Heidegger makes this point with a cogency that went unexamined when this same passage from his 1953 essay on Trakl’s poetry was cited earlier to discuss the wandering stranger:

the madman (der Wahnsinnige). Does the word mean someone who is mentally ill? Madness here does not mean a mind filled with senseless delusions. The madman’s mind – senses in fact as no one else does. Even so, he does not have the sense of others. He is of another mind. The departed one is a man apart, a madman, because he has taken his way in another direction.190

To heed Hölderlin’s exhortation to welcome a measure-taking that acknowledges the presence of a Deity who is unable to be controlled and resists any efforts of complete disclosure will indeed be a strange standard by which to gauge human dwelling on earth. The reigning technological and natural scientific attitude would promote an entirely different measure by which humans would feel comfortably at home and rooted in the world – one that would put them firmly in control and so reduce or eliminate as much ambiguity as possible. Some mysterious God or Transcendent Other who defies human efforts to manipulate, control and dominate might be suitable in some instances governed
by those of faithfilled temperaments. But the dwelling of status quo, promised in a streamlined world of technological precision, has no serious place for some Other of inexhaustible depth. For Heidegger such status quo dwelling is unpoetic. It is based on an unpoetic measure that will have wide appeal for its being in the mainstream and so less strange:

Thus it might be that our unpoetic dwelling, its incapacity to take the measure, derives from a curious excess of frantic measuring and calculating (eines rasen den Messens und Rechnens Käme).191

A reorientation is possible that will quell the frenetic desire to control and dwell unpoetically without serious recognition of the place of mystery. This will occur if there is a willingness to embrace the poet and her mad sense of measure-taking: “Whether, and when, we may come to a turning point in our unpoetic dwelling is something we may expect to happen only if we remain heedful of the poetic.”192 Heeding the poetic means accepting the strange measure taking which establishes rooted dwelling by means of moving in another direction, one that is away from the usual frenzied course seeking absolute control and total mastery. The way of the poet, attuned to the alternative way because of her madness, takes a measure where humans find authentic rooted dwelling in complete acceptance of an elusive and transcendent God. This is not mere status quo dwelling that results from the unpoetic measure taken by technology and scientism, where a feeling of peacefulness comes only when all variables are controlled so that there are no surprises and no mysteries. Instead, genuine rooted dwelling is achieved by the poetic measure that welcomes the God who guards and preserves her concealment. This is poetic dwelling; it is characterized by a true sense of being serenely at home and results from the strange measure taken by the poet whose madness points to another direction:
From that other direction, his madness may be called “gentle,” for his mind pursues a greater stillness (Von dorther durf sein Wahnsinn ein “sanfer” heißen; denn er sinnt Stillerem nach).\textsuperscript{193}

The desire to follow the madperson for unique sagacious insight does not end once rooted dwelling is restored. As the next chapter will point out, not only will Heidegger continue to follow Hölderlin, but he will also be shown following Nietzsche, another thinker gravely inflicted by psychotic illness. Most specifically, Heidegger is captivated by the famed madman who lands upon the town square in \textit{The Gay Science} announcing God’s death. According to Pöggeler, Heidegger willingly followed the “other” directions offered by Hölderlin and Nietzsche in full acceptance of their mental suffering. Their infirmity was not an impediment to thinking but rather a potential source for enrichment and advancement, most remarkably along religious lines. Theirs was a “free theologizing of one[s] marked out by insanity, which burst all established boundaries.”\textsuperscript{194}
Notes

2 Robert S. Gall, Beyond Theism and Atheism: Heidegger’s Significance for Religious Thinking (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 74.
4 Ibid., 123.
5 See chapter one for a discussion of the interesting circumstances which surrounded Heidegger’s granting this interview.
7 There is a need here to ward off any unbalanced caricatures of Heidegger’s concern with technology. Foremost, it will be helpful at this point to realize that Heidegger is not indiscriminately condemning technology wholesale. The precise nature of his critique will be further elaborated at a later point in the chapter.
12 Ibid., 196, 203.
13 Ibid., 204.
17 John D. Caputo, “Thinking, Poetry and Pain,” Southern Journal of Philosophy 28 Supplement (1989): 158. It is important to note Caputo’s caveat here – “on Heidegger’s account.” Heidegger’s unique interpretation of various poets has been the subject of much debate across disciplinary lines.
19 Clark, 182.
21 Kockelmans, 88.
22 Ibid., 87-88.
24 Kockelmans, 152.
28 John Caputo maintains that the lecture Heidegger delivered on January 31, 1962, entitled “Time and Being,” is one of his most important publications. “It is a ‘landmark’ statement in which Heidegger marks off the direction in which his thought has traveled and suggests the way in which he wishes to be understood.” cf. John D. Caputo, “Time and Being in Heidegger,” The Modern Schoolman 50 (May 1973): 327.
30 Kockelmanns, On the Truth of Being, 93.
32 Ibid., 62 (emphasis added).
33 Ibid., 67, 68.
34 Ibid., 67.
38 The figure of the “madman” and the condition of madness will be revisited and more fully explicated at the close of this chapter when the strange “measure” taken by the poet involving a relationship to a mysterious Godhead becomes necessary for the restoration of rooted dwelling upon earth. The strange sense that permits this measure taking will be seen as having similarities with the acuity of the madman who announces the death of God in Nietzsche’s The Gay Science. The emphasis at this point is focused on the “madness” which instills the wandering stranger with a heightened sense of travel or wanderlust necessary to enter into the between. The madness of the madman will undergo a fuller treatment in chapter four.
39 Heidegger, “Language in the Poem,” 173. This quote was augmented by the translation rendered by Karsten Harries in his essay documented in note 37. After a careful examination of the original German text, it became apparent that the Peter D. Hertz translation in On the Way to Language omitted some important phrases necessary for a full appreciation of the wandering stranger.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
49 Ibid., 16.
51 Moran, 16.
53 Ibid., 15.
54 Ibid., 18.
55 Ibid., 19.
57 Ibid., 78.
58 Luijpen, 19.
60 Ibid. (emphasis added).
61 Ibid., 54.
62 Ibid., 58.
64 Ibid., 347.
65 Ibid., 390, n. 14.
66 Luijpen, 181.
67 Smith, 325.
68 Luijpen, 186.
69 Ibid., 186, 187.
70 Ibid., 187.
72 Ibid., 49, 50.
73 Luijpen, 187.
74 Ibid., 50.
77 Ibid., 110.
78 Sokolowski, Introduction to Phenomenology, 22-23.
79 Ibid., 23.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Sokolowski, Husserlian Meditations, 14.
83 Sokolowski, Introduction to Phenomenology, 24.
84 Ibid.
85 Sokolowski, Husserlian Meditations, 13.
86 Sokolowski, Introduction to Phenomenology, 24, 25, 26.
88 Sokolowski, Husserlian Meditations, 13.
89 Woodruff Smith, “Mind and Body,” 336, 337.
90 Sokolowski, Introduction to Phenomenology, 26.
92 Martin Heidegger, Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs, vol. 20 Gesamtausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979): 422. (Translation by author with the assistance from Richard Rojcewicz.)
93 Heidegger, Being and Time, 73-74.
94 Ibid., 74.
95 For a better understanding of the three structural “items” which are singled out by Heidegger as constitutive of Dasein as a unique unitary phenomenon, see Being and Time, Division One, Chapter Two, “Being-in-the-world in General as the Basic State of Dasein.”
96 Heidegger, Being and Time, 65, 78.
97 Ibid., 79.
98 Øverenget, 180.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., 181.
102 Paying close attention to what can be learned about the meaning of Being through the prism of the pained between of the ontological difference as preliminary to anything that may in turn be applicable to the question of the Deity resonates fully with Heidegger’s general understanding of how the sequence of learning moves from Being to God: “Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy is the essence of the divinity to be thought. Only in the light of the essence of the divinity can it be thought or said what the word ‘God’ is to signify.” [“Letter on Humanism,” trans. Frank A. Capuzzi and J. Glenn Gray, in Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964), 2nd ed., ed. David Farrell Krell (New York; HarperCollins, 1993), 253.]
105 Ibid., 224.
106 Ibid., 235. Dennis J. Schmidt recently expressed Dasein’s fluidity with variant imagery when discussing Levinas’ ethics: “I begin with a sense of the ethical which does not take it as assuming the solidity of an autonomous subject; quite the contrary, I take the ethical moment in a sense akin to what Levinas means when he says that ‘it is the putting into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the other,’ and I take Heidegger’s analysis of the porosity of Dasein as equally a given in this matter.” [“On Tragedy and Ethical Life,” in Phenomenology Today: The Schuwer SPEP Lectures 1998-2002, ed. Daniel J. Martino (Pittsburgh: Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center, 2003)].
107 Kockelmans, On the Truth of Being, 104.
110 Kockelmans, On the Truth of Being, 95.
114 Macquarrie, Heidegger and Christianity, 67 (emphasis added).
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 In fact, as Heidegger proceeds to outline what this dwelling-waiting entails, there is an undeniable connection made with his very early thought on religion. In chapter 2 Heidegger’s “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion” course was closely analyzed and the discovery made that the primary focus of the course was the lived-experience of St. Paul’s Thessalonians “waiting for” the parousia. Chapter four will address the issue of waiting for the elusive gods who are yet to come.
121 Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” 147.
122 Ibid., 148.
123 Ibid., 149.
124 Ibid., 150.
126 Kockelmans, On the Truth of Being, 103.
128 Ibid., 35-36.
129 Ibid., 45.
130 Ibid., 48, 49.
131 Ibid., 47.
132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid., 33-34.
135 Ibid., 47.
136 Kockelmanns, On the Truth of Being, 106.
141 Ibid., 4.
143 Ibid., 18.
146 Ibid., 60.
148 Ibid., 47. The author is once again indebted at this point to Richard Rojcewicz for allowing the original German text to be completely accessed in order to clarify and sharpen the extant English translations.
150 Heidegger, “Memorial Address,” 48 (emphasis added): “Gibt es noch wurzelkräftige Heimat, in deren Boden der mensch ständig seht, d.h. boden-ständig ist?”
151 Ibid., 49 (emphasis added).
152 Haar, The Song of the Earth, 62-63.
153 Heidegger, “Memorial Address,” 50.
154 Ibid., 53-54.
155 Ibid., 53.
156 Ibid.
158 Heidegger, “Memorial Address,” 55.
159 Anderson, 139-140.
161 Heidegger, “Memorial Address,” 55.
162 Ibid.
166 Heidegger, “Memorial Address,” 55.
Ibid.


169 Heidegger, “Memorial Address,” 55.

170 Heidegger, “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry,” 60 (emphasis added).


172 Véronique M. Fóti, “Mortals within the Fourfold and the Hölderlinian Figure of Man,” *Philosophy Today* 37 (winter 1993): 393.


174 Ibid., 228.

175 Ibid., 221.


177 Ibid., 100.

178 Ibid.

179 Ibid.

180 Heidegger, “…Poetically Man Dwells…,” 221-222.


182 Heidegger, “…Poetically Man Dwells…,” 222.

183 Ibid., 221.

184 Ibid., 226.

185 Ibid., 223.

186 Ibid.


191 Heidegger, “…Poetically Man Dwells…,” 228 (emphasis added).

192 Ibid.


Chapter Four: Theological Possibility in the Godlessness of Nietzsche and Hölderlin

What is God? Why this question?
Can God be said to be a thing?
Since He is dead, do we not at least owe Him respect for the person He was?
— Jean-Luc Nancy

Therefore, from the time that I have known you,
You have always been present in my memory.
It is there that I find you when I remember you and delight in you.
— St. Augustine

Introduction: Assuming the Nietzschean and Hölderlinian Perspectives

This chapter will conclude this study by carefully examining two texts from Heidegger’s late writings – “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God is Dead’” (1943) and “Remembrance” (1943). While the connection of these lectures is not immediately apparent, it will be shown how each is able to thematically synthesize the major concerns related to Heidegger’s later works and the theology of God. Heidegger’s interest in the death of God vis-à-vis Nietzsche may at first blush appear contradictory and even counter-productive for any positive discussion of God. But as will be seen, if there is a willingness to embrace Nietzsche in the way that Heidegger did in his later writings, then much can be discovered that meaningfully addresses the topic of God in early 21st century postmodernity. Heidegger invites the theologically minded, easily repulsed by Nietzsche’s well-known invectives against Christianity, to assume a Nietzschean perspective.

The effort to keep an open mind and to assume the vantage point of Nietzsche can lead to a fruitful exchange for theology. Trying to see as Nietzsche sees means at least
allowing his message to receive a fair and impartial hearing without ever having to fully embrace his doctrine, which at face value is incompatible with most theological pursuits. William A. Luijpen endorses such an approach for the skeptical philosopher as well when he writes,

Today’s philosopher is willing to examine Nietzsche’s work when, reading what this philosopher and prophet has said, he tries to be sensitive to what Nietzsche has “seen.” For one thing is certain: If Nietzsche belongs to the classics, we cannot say that he has “not seen anything.” He did see something. The modern philosopher, then, is not asked to accept Nietzsche’s theses, but it is expected of him that, in his attempt to express the meaning of reality in his own way, he personally assigns due value to what Nietzsche has seen.¹

Likewise, the theologian who reads Heidegger’s examination of Nietzsche’s declaration of God’s death will stay on course and find enrichment so long as she continually asks, what did Nietzsche have in mind when he made that statement? — what did Nietzsche actually see?

Such an open spirit toward Nietzsche was earlier evidenced in chapter one when attempting to locate Heidegger’s distinctive place in Western philosophy. There openness came rather easy, since Heidegger’s use of Nietzsche was an exercise of safe, academic contrast seeking how best to overcome metaphysics — Nietzsche’s will to power versus Heidegger’s meditative step back. However, the current focus to join Heidegger as he examines Nietzsche’s more incendiary claims — “We have killed Him - you and I! We are all His murderers! … God is dead! God remains dead!” — requires a more conscious effort of openness.

Aside from the theological points of interest that will be exposed in this chapter by the requisite attitude of openness to Nietzsche, it is also important to notice the already mentioned synthetic quality or capacity in Heidegger’s later interest in Nietzsche’s assertion that God is dead. It is synthetic both for the limited intentions of this project as
well as for a more general grasp of Heidegger’s work overall. Many times throughout this study the question of the meaning of Being has been presented as the abiding theme for Heidegger’s life’s work. Most appropriately this became the center piece around which chapter one was developed, since one credible way to appreciate Heidegger’s unique contribution to Western philosophy is by exposing the novel ways he attempted to enroll other thinkers to revisit and reexamine the question of the meaning of Being.

The novelty will be quite palpable below, when Heidegger’s curiosity over Nietzsche’s insistence that God is dead will be seen as ultimately related to the question of the meaning of Being and its plight at the hands of metaphysics. But beyond the ability of Nietzsche’s report of God’s death to demonstrate continuity with Heidegger’s overall thematic concern, there is also the ability for Heidegger’s interest in Nietzsche’s report to forge a synthesis between the thematic interests of this work — God and Heidegger’s later writings. Heidegger is quick to point out something very important that could be easily overlooked in Nietzsche’s textual style when recounting the passage in *The Gay Science* where the madman enters the marketplace to announce obstreperously the death of God. Please refer to Appendix Four, where section 125 of *The Gay Science* has been provided in its entirety to facilitate analysis here and throughout the chapter. Two key phrases are italicized by Nietzsche, and this emphasis for Heidegger holds the interpretive key for understanding the nature of God’s death. The two phrases read “*We have killed him*” and “*and yet they have done it themselves,*” and for Heidegger these are significant as clear expressions of Nietzsche’s desire to implicate humanity in this surreal event. He writes:

The two italicized sentences give the interpretation for the word “God is dead” … The pronunciation means something worse: God has been killed … For the word “God is dead” would be much more readily
grasped if it declared: God himself, of his own accord distanced himself from his living presence. But that God should be killed by others and indeed by men is unthinkable.2

Such a weighty charge should produce reactions of varied kind and intensity, Heidegger notes that even: “Nietzsche himself was astounded at this thought.”3 But whatever the initial reaction, it need not eventuate in some sort of debilitation as long as the context of Heidegger’s later writings is kept in mind. Responding to the grandiose indictment for God’s murder becomes bearable when reminded of one of Heidegger’s main later concerns — the forgetfulness of Being (Seinsvergessenheit). Though the particulars of this phenomenon were closely discussed above in chapter one, it is important now to recall Heidegger’s basic belief that Western metaphysics since Plato has suffered from this vexing amnesia. The immediate result of this affliction has been to compromise genuine access to the meaning of Being. Symptomatic of this condition of forgetfulness is misdirected, if not defective, thinking and Heidegger renders a differential diagnosis when he makes the following connections:

This ultimate blow in the killing of God is perpetuated by metaphysics, which, as the metaphysics of the will to power, accomplishes thinking in the sense of value-thinking … Nowhere are we confronted by a thinking that thinks the truth of Being itself and therewith thinks truth itself as Being … Nothing is befalling Being. Being is not coming into the light of its own essence. In the appearing of whatever as such, Being itself remains wanting. The truth of Being falls from memory. It remains forgotten.4

With a clearer understanding of where Heidegger assigns the blame for God’s death when reading Nietzsche, a natural question arises, what if anything can be done? In other words, once all the parties associated with Western metaphysical thinking, including theology, have been convicted of contributing in some way to God’s death, is there some meaningful form of restitution, is there some opportunity for redress? An
affirmative response to these questions is possible, but true to any Heideggerian path that will lead to restitution and redress, the charted course will not be direct or easy. While this may be mildly frustrating for the philosopher, it can become downright discouraging for the theologian. Fully aware that the potential for frustration was great and wanting to stave off any quick fix solutions to ease the pain, as early as chapter one this study sounded a cautionary note to avoid what John Macquarrie called a “false move” in the interaction between Heidegger and theology. Reckless and desperate maneuvers can be avoided in theology’s efforts to exculpate itself from God’s death if the following familiar Heideggerian priority is heeded:

> Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought.  
> Only from the holy is the essence of divinity to be thought. Only in the light of the essence of the divinity can it be thought or said what the word “God” is to signify.⁵

Without revisiting the complexities treated in chapter three surrounding Heidegger’s tendency to toss about seemingly synonymous terms — holy, divinity, God — it is important here to appreciate in Heidegger’s sequential chain the place of primacy given to Being. Only after the meaning and truth of Being has been adequately addressed is it possible to broach the question of God. As disconcerting as this may be for theologians interested in an express route to God, it nonetheless presents a window for dialogue between their work and Heidegger.

The matter of God’s death is no exception. God’s murder was a conspiracy aided and abetted by generations of thinkers across disciplinary lines who embraced the reigning mode of thought known as metaphysics. Of its many deficiencies, one was its ability to cultivate and advance a forgetfulness of Being to the point that “The truth of Being falls from memory” and so “remains forgotten.” The challenge then becomes to
arrest and reverse this state of forgetfulness in order to achieve some progress in the discovery of Being’s genuine truth and meaning. Essential to meeting this challenge is the obvious need to neutralize those aspects of metaphysical thinking that foster forgetfulness and memory loss and to find instead a thinking that not only enhances the activity of remembering but more importantly infuses the activity with a deeper quality of meditative commemoration. Such a tack resonates with the grand scheme to overcome metaphysics outlined in chapter one. There a meditative step-back into the ontological difference was shown to be the most effective strategy for philosophy to re-approach the Being question with all due respect for its mysterious depth. Meditative thinking was best suited for this task when qualified as a recollective thinking (*andenken*).

While obviously related to the wide-ranging goals to overcome metaphysics and give philosophy a new beginning, this chapter’s interests in memory and remembering have a very specific purpose. No longer is genuine recollection important as a devotional sub-category and qualification of meditative thinking; instead, as will be seen later *andenken* can be upheld in its own right as the most efficacious way for philosophers and theologians to exonerate themselves from participating in a particular event in the 2,500 year period of metaphysics — the death of God. To effectuate this project recourse will be made to Heidegger’s interpretation of Hölderlin’s late poem “Remembrance.” Please refer to Appendix Three where the poem has been provided in its entirety to facilitate this analysis. In Heidegger’s line by line commentary the special power of remembering will be exposed. While no patent mention of God’s death is found in Heidegger’s thorough analysis of Hölderlin’s poem, the connection will become evident as these reflections are placed in the wider context of Heidegger’s special reverence for Hölderlin’s perspicacity.
Specifically, it can be recalled in chapters one and three how Heidegger was inspired by Hölderlin to describe the present age as a “needy time” (dürftige Zeit). Because Hölderlin has the distinction of having established the essence of poetry, it is also Heidegger’s related contribution that Hölderlin identified and inaugurated a new era. Heidegger writes that this “new” time,

is the time of the gods who have fled and of the god who is coming. It is the time of need because it stands in a double lack and a double not:
in the no-longer of the gods who have fled and in the not-yet of the god who is coming.6

The special role that poets and poetizing play in overcoming dilemmas of various sort has been well chronicled in this study. Yet Heidegger invokes the poetic charisms once more with hope that they will offer the best means to confront an unprecedented challenge of great magnitude. For Hölderlin’s new needy time the gods have fled and for Nietzsche “There has never been a greater deed”7 than God’s murder. Hölderlin’s estimation of the current situation appears to be the more hopeful at first glance, since he blatantly juxtaposes the condition of godlessness with the possibility of the gods’ return. The closer treatment of Nietzsche that will take place below, however, will depict Heidegger’s more positive evaluation of Nietzsche’s assertions for theology. For now it is important not to hastily pit Hölderlin against Nietzsche, but to see theological possibility lurking in both. Commentators recommend varied approaches to salvage Nietzsche’s voice from being quickly silenced and dismissed as harbinger of a new era of atheistic nihilism. Dirk de Schutter sees Nietzsche’s more hopeful side residing in his ambiguity: “Nietzsche remains ambiguous: he proclaims the death of God and confesses his belief that a new type of god is possible.”8 In a similar vein Luca D’Isanto views Nietzsche’s inconclusiveness as pointing to a deeper theological opportunity: “This death, however,
does not settle the question concerning the divine being. Indeed, Nietzsche himself left open the possibility that new gods might be created; in other words, he did not close off the possibility of a renewal of religious experience. 9 Finally, the insights of Erich Heller and Anthony Thorlby are valuable for maintaining a balanced view of the theological prospects occasioned by Hölderlin’s fled gods and Nietzsche’s dead God. They observe, “Both Hölderlin and Nietzsche are possessed by a more intense and genuine feeling for man’s spiritual need than is shown by much orthodox belief.” 10

The Existential Anxiety of Godless Nothingness

Just how magnanimous either Hölderlin or Nietzsche are or whether or not they would want to be depicted as spiritual guides in troubling times remains subject to debate. Nonetheless, for Heidegger these poets have, by their varied proclamations of divine withdrawal, necessarily ushered in a disturbing time, whether one of “needy destitution” (Hölderlin) or one that is a “monstrous logic of terror” (Nietzsche). And even if an attitudinal openness prevents outright panic and waits in hope for something deeper to be revealed about God, it remains nevertheless a distressing transitional time replete with the typical anxiety operative during such phases. Even though Heidegger oftentimes shrugged off the labels of existentialist, he remains true to his phenomenological approach to feeling/mood and so urges an embrace of the anxiety accompanying this unprecedented time of godlessness. For the early Heidegger in Being and Time, die Angst is the basic way in which one finds oneself — the Grundbefindlichkeit. 11

Where, better yet, how does one find herself in the wake of the dead God/departed gods? It is clear from the foregoing that the where is readily comprehended as an interim
state. Yet discerning the condition of how is less easily grasped, clouded as the
discernment is by the haze of existential anxiety. Without question, to search for an
answer to the question of how one finds oneself in light of the realization that there is no
God would be an incontestable instance of anxiety as developed in the existential
tradition. There anxiety is a more comprehensive mood than the ordinary fear associated
with being afraid of certain things. For the existentialists, anxiety is provoked by an
overwhelming sense of nothingness within our own being. William Barrett eloquently
delineates the concept of anxiety and its place in existential philosophy:

Anxiety is not fear, being afraid of this or that definite object, but the
uncanny feeling of being afraid of nothing at all. It is precisely
Nothingness that makes itself present and felt as the object of our
dread. The first time this fundamental human experience was described
was by Kierkegaard … Heidegger has greatly expanded and deepened
Kierkegaard’s insight.12

An entire section in chapter one, “Being and the Embarrassment of Nothing,” attests to
one mode of Heidegger’s expansion noted by Barrett. There, Heidegger was seen once
again recommending that philosophy embrace the anxiety attendant with the discovery
that Being is intimately related to non-Being or nothing. What made this proposition
sunnier than the current invitation to welcome the anxiety linked to the fled gods/dead
God was that a connection was made with the mystical theology of Meister Eckhart. A
careful similarity was drawn between the non-Being aspect of Being and the mysterious
nothingness of the Godhead. This profound nothingness of God could however be
positively encountered as long as the spiritual sojourner was willing to embrace the
mysterious abysmal nothingness of her own soul.

The effort to integrate the anxiety and be clear about how one finds oneself
becomes a much more arduous task. Now the gods have left and God has been murdered,
there is no possibility of latching on to some deeper aspect of their being, since their
elusiveness has become an absence. Because the intensity level of anxiety produced by this stark encounter with nothingness cannot be quickly defused, there is the great potential for escapism. Nietzsche’s speaking through the madman who has just announced God’s demise by human hands captures well the resulting degree of anxiety. He writes:

How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all the world yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us?\(^{13}\)

If the anxiety produced is too great to bear when confronted by this godless nothingness, escape becomes an option to relieve the overwhelming stress. This likely reaction is based on Heidegger’s estimation of what happens when the nothingness that the human existent confronts within his own being leads to a sobering sense of radical insecurity, which can only be coped with by flight. The discussion of anxiety in this light is developed in *Being and Time* by Heidegger’s analysis of “Falling” (*Verfallen*).\(^{14}\) Macquarrie as co-translator of this work provides the following helpful gloss on Falling occasioned by the intense dread of inner nothingness:

In Heidegger’s view, what happens in falling is that the existent flees from himself. He may lose himself in the inauthentic being-with-others which is called the “they” or again in the busy-ness of his concerns with the world of things.\(^{15}\)

However because anxiety is the *Grundbefindlichkeit*, the mood which offers a total disclosure of human existence, it must do more than incite self-evasion in the face of nothingness which in turn seeks refuge from the dread by the stop gap tranquilizing effect of absorption in people and things. Aside from dread, anxiety in the face of nothingness also produces a sense of fascination. In other words, while an initial anxiety ridden
reaction may result in a short term desire to escape from the threat of nothingness into a frenzied preoccupation with the everyday routine involving tasks and others, there is also the possibility of a secondary reaction. A more sustained and consequential modality of anxiety before nothingness is fascination over the realization that freedom and possibility are the true outcomes of entertaining the nothingness of oneself. At some point, then, anxiety is able to shift the experiential reaction to nothingness from avoidance to approach. Anxiety continues to rumble beneath the seeming calm rendered by egress (Fallenness) into mundane concerns, but eventually it jerks the existent (*Dasein*) out of these pseudo-securities and throws the human person back to a realization of his unique freedom and possibility. Heidegger explains:

> Anxiety thus takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself, as it falls, in terms of the “world” and the way things have been publicly interpreted. Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about — its authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world … Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its *Being towards* its ownmost potentiality-for-Being — that is, its *Being-free for* the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself. Anxiety brings Dasein face to face with its *Being-free for* (*propensio in...*) the authenticity of its Being … as Dasein falls, anxiety brings it back from its absorption in the “world.”

Heidegger’s early work on the being of human existence holds out hope in the current challenge to stare down the nothingness created by the departure of the divinities and the execution of the divine. Anxiety is always present in the being of the human person to attain authentic self-understanding in light of a pervasive sense of nothingness. Though the initial anxiety is dreadful, and causes a reaction of flight, there is a gradual awakening in anxiety that becomes fascinated by the nothingness and this inspires the self to make the free decisions necessary to work toward an authentic existence. Can a similar pattern be followed now with a genuine hope for a meaningful ending? In other words, can the initial anxiety of dread experienced in the encounter of gods who have
withdrawn and a God who has been killed engender an exclusive reaction of escape? (“Is not the greatness of the deed too great for us?”) Or, can this initial panic provoking anxiety be directed and converted to a sense of wonder and fascination that godless nothingness is really an opportunity for theology to realize an authentic possibility?

This last question can be resoundingly answered in the affirmative so long as there is an appropriate program in place to receive and guide the initial anxiety to its more promising ends. Finding such a program is easier and closer at hand than might first be realized, since it is none other than poetics that will offer the best resource to positively integrate the initial anxiety aroused by godlessness. In the previous chapter, passing mention was made of the special vocation of the poet during this needy time. There the primary emphasis for developing the potentials of poetized thinking was to expose the poet as a wandering stranger. Her willingness to journey into and inhabit the between of Heidegger’s ontological difference became emblematic of poetic dwelling, which necessarily entails some relationship with the Godhead evaluated by poetic measurement. In those discussions, the presence of the gods and God was presumed, and two of Heidegger’s favorite poets — Trakl and Hölderlin — were enlisted and shown to be exemplary practitioners of poetic thinking able to address the issues at hand. Once again, recourse is made to poetics and exclusively to the writings of Hölderlin in order to achieve a theologically meaningful outcome from encountering the reality of godless nothingness. According to Heidegger the poet is up to the challenge, “The time is needy and the poet is extremely rich … But he holds his ground in the Nothing of this night.”

17
The Venturesome Poet and the Traces of the Divine

What is it about the mien of the poet that enables her to stand firm in the face of this daunting nothingness? Heidegger maintains that poets are more venturesome and open to taking risks (die Wagenderen) The mention made in the last chapter concerning the thinker/poet embodied in the figure of Trakl’s wandering stranger, who possessed a trait of openness for an adventuresome journey into the between of the ontological difference, is similar but not exact. The venturesome risk taking is now assigned exclusively to the poet who plays a specific role in the needy time of absent deities.

Before coming to appreciate the effectiveness that comes with the poet’s possession of a venturesome spirit when comforting the angst of godlessness, it will be necessary to be aware of another distinction made by Heidegger. In his 1943 postscript to “What is Metaphysics?”, Heidegger concludes his considerations of the relation between philosophy and poetry by stating, “The thinker says being. The poet names the holy.”18 Space does not allow for a complete analysis of Heidegger’s understanding of the holy (das Heilige), but suffice it to say that the gods and God are not synonymous with the holy. Keeping this basic refinement in mind will prevent any misconstruals of the poetic activity beyond its Heideggerian parameters as Robert Bernasconi is wont to remind: “the naming of the gods is not the same as the naming of the holy that Heidegger writes of when characterizing the difference between poet and thinker.”19 For Heidegger it is necessary to create a crucial intermediary region called the holy that has direct bearings on the poet’s venturesome nature in her encounters with the gods’/God’s elusiveness. Several commentators believe that the holy becomes the equivalent to Being in many instances of Heidegger’s writings on Hölderlin. Convinced of the genesis of Being’s
linkage to the holy in Heidegger’s evolving thought, Joseph Kockelmans writes: “In his reflections on Hölderlin’s poems, Heidegger finds the proper words to describe Being as the holy.” Bishop Bernhard Welte, who delivered the homily at Heidegger’s funeral, offers insight that broadens the understanding of the Being-holy connection so that the role of the risk seeking, venturesome poet meeting the challenge of godless nothingness becomes clearer. He contends, “The poet who ‘dwells in the region of the openness of Being’ and is aware of its possible grace is allowed to call it holy.” But to arrive at an even clearer grasp of the poet’s role it must be asked, what does this dimension, whose overarching breadth is coequal with Being, have to do with the gods and their vexing evasiveness? A first step toward answering this question is the realization that for Heidegger the holy is the god’s/ded’s dwelling place, “The High One … inhabits the Serene of the holy.” However, consonant with the understanding of Being presented many times throughout this study, the realm of the holy does not provide the type of carte blanche conditions where its most famous resident can come and go at will or entertain visitors without restriction. In other terms, the holy in keeping with the unconcealment/concealment operation of Being, regulates the nature and extent of the gods'/God’s availability and accessibility. Heidegger explains, “The Holy does indeed appear. But the god remains far off.” The word “trace” (die Spur) becomes the most forceful way for Heidegger to convey the regulatory influence that the holy exercises as lord of the manor over the gods'/God’s interactions. Kockelmans offers this analysis: “Holding Himself back in the vastness of the holy (i.e. Being as what is whole), God waits there and sends holiness out before Him as his trace.” Even with the valid charges that the holy imposes a rather inhibitive force upon the gods'/God’s availability and
access, it is nonetheless for Heidegger the medium through which their presence appears. Michael Haar recommends the need for an acceptant and tolerant attitude when trying to come to terms with Heidegger’s innovative yet complex reflection on the holy’s functioning in relation to the gods/God:

the Holy is … the original and inaugural light, the native soul that makes possible the advent of a God or the gods. For [Heidegger] without a preludial Holy — conceived as the Wholesome [Being] … or that which has the power to save — no god can appear.25

But even if one can learn to be comfortable with the activity of the holy, it still remains extremely troublesome to deal with these ungenerous traces or glimpses it offers of God. The difficulty level increases when it is remembered that God’s death/the gods’ fleeing further encumbers any access to an ephemeral trace. David White lends support to the mounting complexity with his claim that, “Although Heidegger does not expressly state this, one can assume that traces of a flown deity are more difficult to locate than traces of anything else.”26

Without question, the daring poetic demeanor becomes requisite to boldly confront this anxiety ridden situation, where godless nothingness has been complicated in a twofold way. As intimidating as it may be to first learn of the gods’ departure and God’s death, an added layer of intimidation results with the realization that the means to any possible recovery and restoration is through the strictures of the holy. Heidegger highlights with eloquence the unflappable spirit of the poet who is able to sing amidst the gloom of this manifold nothingness:

To be a poet in a destitute [needy] time means: to attend singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods. This is why the poet in the time of the world’s night utters the holy. This is why … the world’s night is a holy night.27
Undaunted by the bleakness of divine absence and the encumbrances offered by the holy to thwart any unobscured reappearance, the poet moves forward. With a song in her heart she offers hope to those interested by indicating that traces of the gods’/God’s presence are discernible even when — especially when — strong forces do all that they can to militate against it. This implacable force is the holy for Heidegger, and despite its ability to add insult to injury by hiding an already hidden deity the venturesome poet fully embraces the functioning of the holy/unholy and accepts its obfuscations as preparatory to and concomitant with the resurgent brightness of the gods’/God’s traces. He writes:

Poets who are of the more venturesome kind (Wagenderen) are underway on the track of the holy because they experience the unholy as such … the more venturesome [sort] experience unshieldedness in the unholy. They bring to mortals the trace of the fugitive gods, the track into the dark of the world’s night.28

**Essential Poetic Activity**

While the primary motivation behind Heidegger’s praise for the venturesome poet centers on the spirit of bravery and hope to encounter head-on the dark night of the holy in order to glimpse traces of the gods’/God’s presence, it is also important to appreciate that this venturesome nature operates simultaneously in another dimension — temporality. Realizing that poetic venturesomeness transcends a boldness for the darkness, a quality of space, and also includes a willingness to hold out promise for the nighttime hours recasts the search for the gods’/God’s traces within a unique relationship to the temporal. It can be recalled how Heidegger firmly stamps the essence of poetic activity with the imprint of temporal significance. The essence of poetry determines a new *time*, the crucible in which the venturesome poet is put to the test as it is a needy/destitute time of double lack and double not — the no-more of the gods who have
fled or the God who has been murdered and the not yet of the god/God who is returning. Undoubtedly, this is a between time, and the suggestion that the poet will be naturally suited for it is a variation on another familiar theme. Chapters one and three devoted a great deal of attention to the multiple purposes that the between realm serves for Heidegger as well as for the role of the thinker and poet as its best qualified inhabitants. Moreover, chapter two addressed the temporal evidence of the early Thessalonian church from a phenomenological perspective in order to examine the between time of Jesus’ ascension and his futural return at the Parousia.

While the current focus on the between as a temporal modality is related to these previous efforts, it will be shown that poetic engagement with this modality possesses a certain distinctiveness in the later Heideggerian corpus which in turn has the greatest bearing for any current theological discussion of God. As Heidegger reflects on Hölderlin’s poem “Remembrance” he casts the work of the poet in broad temporal relief — the between of the past and future. At one point in the poem, the poet asks for a sip from a fragrant cup, “But someone pass me/Full of dark light/The fragrant cup …”29 This request, according to Heidegger, is no light occasion for cheer but rather a definitive gesture for the poet’s very vocation.

> When he calls for the cup, does he not rather call for the fragrance which anesthetizes one into forgetfulness and for the inebriating drink which makes one lose consciousness? …When the poet calls out for the fragrant cup, he is asking to be confirmed in the essential law of his poetic activity, which is to think with one accord of what has been and of what is coming, instead of sleeping through the time which now is.30

The ability to comfortably exist and move between the two temporal realms of past and future could appear as a burdensome task. The poet could find herself overcome by the challenges of bilocation, ultimately resulting in the schizophrenic bifurcation of
personhood. On the other hand, she could merely resolve the seeming conflict and divert all attention and energy to one realm, resulting in a nostalgia for the past or a fantasy-like optimism for the future. There is, however, a thinking at the disposal of the poet which in fact is an integral part of the poetic character. It avoids these pitfalls and permits the poet to meaningfully think “with one accord” the what has been of the past and the what is coming of the future. Heidegger calls this thinking \textit{andenken} – remembrance. This was discussed above in chapter one because of the meditative quality it brings to philosophical thinking. With such an enhancement, the way was cleared there to consider the means for philosophy to better confront Being’s desire to conceal itself through recollective thought. The stress now is to demonstrate how remembrance is the distinctive thinking of poetic activity which allows the poet to comfortably and effectively relate to the past and future.

A fuller treatment of why remembering offers such rich opportunity for the poet will take place later in the chapter. There the experiential depths of remembering and memory will be examined from an existential-phenomenological perspective. Presently, it is adequate to appreciate Heidegger’s establishment of remembrance as the exclusive provenance of poetry and secondly to acknowledge its ability to achieve a unique temporal feat — the creation of integrative accord between past and future. Heidegger conveys the first point with an uncharacteristic directness and succinctness as he concludes his lengthy essay on Hölderlin’s poem “Remembrance”, “Poetry is Remembrance.”\footnote{31} His belief in remembering’s capacity to perform temporal marvels comes through in an earlier part of the essay. In more typical style Heidegger writes:

\begin{quote}
one of the mysteries of re-thinking-of (An-denken) is that it thinks toward what-has-been, in such a way though, that what-has-been comes back to the one who thinks of it, coming from the opposite direction. Of
\end{quote}
course this does not mean that what-has-been remains standing now like a kind of object present in the present moment of a mere representation. If remembrance of what-has-been lets this be in its own essence, and does not disturb it by a hasty misreckoning, trying to bring it into the present, then we experience what-has-been, returning in the remembrance, swinging out beyond our present, and coming to us as something futural. All at once this remembrance must think of what-has-been, as something which is not yet unfolded.32

A hint of remembering’s important capacity to ensure that the poet faithfully lives out her poetic vocation was evident when reference was made to Heidegger’s highlighting of Hölderlin’s estimation of the result of the poet’s imbibing of the fragrant cup. There it may have been easily overlooked, but swallowing the draught of the heady wine is not intended to induce the poet into a drunken stupor of forgetfulness, but instead is meant to be a moment of unprecedented clear-headedness and alertness when the poet’s vocation is confirmed as a thinking that thinks “with one accord” what has been and what is coming “instead of sleeping through the time which now is.” Such sensitized acuity for the vicissitudes of temporality is cultivated only by remembering, the very antithesis of forgetting.

Adrian Del Caro lends support to Heidegger’s interpretation of the far reaching implications surrounding the poet’s consumption of the fragrant cup. In his more recent analysis of Hölderlin’s poem “Remembrance” he offers this point: “If we take this fragrant cup to be filled with wine, which is dark light because the holy quality of wine equalizes or reconciles day and night, then the poet is on the verge of entering a new phase of remembrance.”33 In keeping with the overall purpose of his study of Hölderlin, the final outcome of the poet’s state of heightened temporal sensitivity induced by the dark light wine of remembrance is an encounter with Being: “the poet reaches the highest level of remembering as an event manifesting Being.”34
Earlier an important correspondence was established between Being and the holy in Heidegger’s general appropriation of Hölderlin’s poetry. With this in mind, it is safe to raise an important question: Does the remembering of the poet to bring about an innovative encounter with the past and future modes of temporality, which culminates in an encounter with Being, have the related potential to also engage the holy? If so, the venturesome spirit of the poet to face down the nothingness of godlessness would be seen as complementary to the essence of the poetic calling to foster a temporal flow where past and future are united by remembering. In this case the poet is without doubt the key figure to confront this needy time of a double lack, a double not — the No-more past of the gods who have fled and the Not-yet future of the god who is coming. The intricacies of the poet’s interaction with the holy will be fully developed in the final section of the chapter. Most specifically, the dynamic surrounding the remembering poet’s being “greeted” by the holy will be seen as offering an exciting opportunity for theological speculation. In this way, all the necessary steps will be presented to demonstrate how/why the remembering poet is the key figure able to make sense out of this needy time. Such a presentation will safeguard the integrity of Heidegger’s thinking and also allow for a cautious theological expansion. Closer at hand, it must be borne in mind that the extraordinary significance of poetic remembrance cannot be captured entirely in its ability to foster a holistic relationship between the temporal modes of past and future. As laudatory as this may be, it remains, more or less, an important claim that Heidegger directs to philosophy. However this does become the conceptual foundation upon which theology can cautiously build. With respect paid to the temporal achievements that Heidegger bestows on poetic remembrance, it becomes an easy theological extrapolation
to apply this meditative gift of the poet to the workings of the temporal theological movement *par excellence* identified by Heidegger as the needy time — a past of the fled gods/dead God and a future of the gods/God yet to arrive.

**The Dark Holy Night of Reverential Shelter for Past and Future Gods**

The venturesome spirit of the poet now takes on a greater depth. Above, the poet’s daring was extolled by Heidegger for its ability to productively transform the anxiety/fear of godless nothingness and channel it to hopeful signs of divine presence: “poets who are of the more venturesome kind … bring to mortals the trace of the fugitive gods.”\(^{35}\) And while all of this daring was acknowledged to have taken place with a certain level of temporal consciousness — “To be a poet in a destitute [needy] time means: to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods”\(^{36}\) — this awareness is given its greatest due when the needy time in which the poet speaks is set in the broader temporal relief of day and night: “They [the venturesome poets] bring to mortals the trace of the fugitive gods, the track into the dark of the world’s night.”\(^{37}\) Heidegger insists that this dark night of the world can be ironically appreciated as a luminous or “holy” night when placed against the backdrop of Hölderlin’s poetry. As he submits Hölderlin’s “Remembrance” to a rigorous exegesis, Heidegger is struck at one point by the following line as an important Hölderlinian corrective to the typical bias against the night as an exclusive time of impenetrable darkness and gloom: “In the month of March,/When night and day are equal.” By fastening on to the equilibrium potential of the vernal equinox when day and night are nearly the same length, as well as highlighting Hölderlin’s placing night before day, Heidegger points out Hölderlin’s efforts to challenge any diminished perceptions of the night:
Usually we use the word sequence day and night. We first call out the day as being “positive.” We let follow it the night, which is its disappearance. Night is the absence of day. But for Hölderlin the night which precedes the day is the sheltering profusion of the day, even though still indeterminate. Night is the mother of day.38

The venturesome grit of the poet meets yet another test in her ability to welcome the night and cultivate a level of comfort for its attendant darkness. For if night is the mother of day — not the mere lack of day — then the only effective way to live with and welcome the night is to wait for its hidden potential to burst forth. This has some resonance with the measure-taking endeavors of the poet discussed in the previous chapter. There the ability of the poet to restore an authentic rooted dwelling for humanity was determined by a measurement that puts the human-divine relation in proper order. To take this measurement the poet looks to the sky as the cosmological staging area for both daytime’s revelatory brightness and the night’s concealing darkness as symbolic of a god or God who encounters humanity in both illuminating presence and obscuring absence. Now, however, the poet’s venturesome mettle is undergoing a strain that surpasses a measure-taking calibrated by neatly defined categories where rooted human dwelling is achieved by receiving the day light as metaphorical of God’s presence and merely tolerating the night as metaphorical of Her absence. The night is to be valued for its own sake as “the mother of day” — a creative nurturing force — instead of a privation of day — a defective property.

Poetic and Nautical Night Watch

To underscore that only the most venturesome poet is up to the task to stay with the night and willingly embrace it for its own potential, Heidegger likens the poet to a sailor or mariner. He is able to do this in his interpretation of Hölderlin with little
difficulty since the poem “Remembrance” has been dubbed by Del Caro as “Hölderlin’s
greatest completed hymn featuring the theme of sea travel.”\textsuperscript{39} The vocation of the poet is
therefore readily juxtaposed with that of the sailor to suit Heidegger’s interpretive
purpose without doing violence to Hölderlin’s original intentions. Del Caro also supports
this claim when he writes, “When we follow the chronology of Hölderlin’s
correspondence we learn that the theme of the sea and images of seafaring play a vital
role in his perception of the poet.”\textsuperscript{40} In keeping with the spirit of Hölderlin, why does
Heidegger at various points of his analysis of “Remembrance” make the explicit
assertions that, “the poets must first be mariners, ” and “These poets are mariners”?\textsuperscript{41} To
set sail on the open seas for any length of time means to navigate during the day as well
as the night, and it is this working with and through the night that makes the sailor worthy
of comparison to and even emulation by the poet. Heidegger alludes to the fourth stanza
of “Remembrance” and allows Hölderlin’s eloquence to express the sailor’s vocation to
be at home with the night.

To dwell alone, for years, beneath
The leafless mast, where through the night gleam neither
The holidays of the town,
Nor lyre-music and native dancing.

These lines indicate the type of difficulties which besets the lifestyle of the sailor.
He is certainly a venturesome sort in his own right and this serves as a genuine role
model for the venturesome poet. Forced to be at sea for lengthy periods means that all the
usual humanizing features of being at home on dry land are suspended. For Heidegger,
this level of alienation reaches its most acute form when the sailor must forgo spending
holidays with family and friends. He writes:

the mariners dwell in something unhomelike far from the shady forests
of the homeland …
The mariners are without holidays. So it seems as if they are without relation to the festival, thrust into a festival-less time (eine festlose Zeit).\textsuperscript{42}

Del Caro lends credence to Heidegger’s interpretation of Hölderlin on the severity of the sailor’s isolationistic lifestyle: “Hölderlin’s seafarers make the great sacrifice of distance, solitude, darkness, and barrenness.”\textsuperscript{43} But for Heidegger what sums up all the many challenges faced by the sailor alone at sea is his night work. Heidegger pauses after reflecting on Hölderlin’s depiction of the alienation of the sailor to note that the life of solitude, homesickness and the lack of familial holiday merriment can all be withstood because first and foremost the sailor is able to endure the night. That is why Heidegger puzzles over Hölderlin’s interjecting the word “night” as he litanies the many obstacles of loneliness overcome by the sailor:

To dwell alone, for years, beneath
The leafless mast,
Where through the night gleam neither
The holiday of the town
Nor lyre-music and native dancing. (emphasis added)

For Heidegger, it is no accident that the night is associated with the trying life of the sailor, since the duties of night watch occasion the defining attitude for the sailor’s calling and existence. He ponders:

But why does Hölderlin expressly name the night? Because the mariners keep watch throughout their journey. Insofar as their wakefulness determines the whole manner in which they persist in the season of wandering, this season appears as the time of night.\textsuperscript{44}

Vigilance throughout the night characterizes the sailor’s life and explains his model venturesome spirit. The night time is not seen as exclusively a time of meaningless darkness or opaque obscurity. Instead, the sailor remains true to his calling and remains vigilant for the promise of the night as well as its threats. Heidegger continues:

The period of this night does not plunge into mere blackness, which lets nothing appear. This night has its own clarity (eine Klarheit) … The
The affinity between the vocation of the sailor and that of the poet is now clear. The venturesome hearty temperament of the sailor is best expressed as he assumes the duties of night watch marked by an attitude of vigilance for the promise that the darkness may bring. The poet, too, is called in this needy time to accept a night watch as she points out traces of the fled gods/dead God and those yet to come in the darkness of the world’s night. Heidegger makes an important qualification about this world’s night that confirms the parallel between the poet and sailor and their respective charges to watch through the night with venturesome spirits. Familiar is Heidegger’s job description of the venturesome poet in this needy time. She points out for humanity the traces of the gods who have fled or the God who has been killed as well as traces of the gods/God yet to arrive. Tracking these evasive deities takes place in the dark of the world’s night, but for Heidegger this night is granted a special distinction by Hölderlin: “In Hölderlin’s language, the world’s night is the sacred/holy night.” It will be recalled how in Heidegger’s reflections on Hölderlin’s poetry, the holy provides the larger ontological framework from which the gods/God appear — from the slightest trace to an eventual full blown return. As the sailor dutifully maintains a vigilant watch through the night, so too does the poet. The night is not sheer nothingness for the sailor but rather, as has been noted, “has its own clarity” for the overall journey. Likewise, the night of the poet under the auspices of the holy (“the holy night”) during the needy time of double not — the no more gods of the past and the not yet gods of the future — has its own clarity and purposiveness that must be venturesomely confronted. Holiness suffuses the darkness of the world’s night and while there may only be the slightest traces of the gods/God
detectable throughout the poet’s watch, there is the hope that a fuller manifestation of divine presence is possible with the dawning of a new day. The holy is always preparatory for any encounter with the gods/God in Heidegger’s schema, but the night as holy conveys an added dimension to its preparatory function. Heidegger’s observations on this score are worth quoting in full:

Night is the mother of day. Insofar as the holy comes in the breaking of the day, and the advent of the gods is given, the night is the time of god-lessness (Gott-losigkeit). This word does not mean here the mere lack or even the naked absence of gods. The time of god-lessness contains what is indecisive about what is yet to be decided. Night is the time of the sheltering of the gods of the past and of the concealment of the gods that are coming. Because the night, in such sheltering-concealing darkness, is not nothing, it also has its own vast clarity (eine weite Klarheit) and the peacefulness of the silent preparation for something which is coming.47

While there is much that can be unpacked in Heidegger’s observations, there are a few key points that should definitely not be lost in his turgid prose. For one thing, this passage makes very clear the close resemblance between the sailor and the poet as they complete their respective night watch tasks. Nautical navigation requires a vigilance with and through the night, but the sailor does not see this chore as a necessary evil or drudgery. Instead the night offers its own sort of “clarity” (Klarheit). The sailor does not approach the night with trepidation as if its darkness were a “mere blackness, which lets nothing appear.” The night is venturesomely accepted and experienced for its promise as the “mother of the day.”

The poet likewise is called to steer humankind through a needy time that includes a holy night. It is a two tiered time of god-lessness. On the one hand the gods have fled or the God has been killed, and on the other hand they are yet to come back. But this dark night time of two-layered god-lessness is not mere blackness. It, too, has its own clarity, whereby it affords a unique opportunity to encounter the divine and so is no “mere lack”
or “naked absence of gods.” The venturesome poet does not run from this darkness but vigilantly embraces the seeming nothingness of godlessness for its deeper potential. The darkness of this two-fold godless night is more of a sheltering or protective cloak as opposed to a blanket of obscure impenetrability. For Heidegger it is a “sheltering-concealing darkness” (bergend-verbergenden Nachten) whereby the dead God/fled gods of the past are safely sheltered and the returning God/new gods are concealed, but with a sense of anticipatory hopefulness. In other words, encounters with the deities are possible but not in any conventional way. The past God who is dead/the past gods who have fled are there in the safety of the darkness of the holy night. Likewise, the God who will return in the future or the new gods of eager expectation are concealed in the darkness of the holy night as a gesture of respect for their initiative and choice of how and when to become fully manifest. To put this in other terms, this concealment of the gods’/God’s future appearance is meant to foster a reverential uncertainty for any eventual arrival. In Heidegger’s words this nighttime of anticipatory godlessness “contains what is indecisive about what is yet to be decided.” The venturesome spirit of the poet is therefore tempered by a sense of wonder and humility. While she bravely keeps watch through the holy night of double godlessness with a sense of hope that absent gods from the past and future will be encountered, she nonetheless respects the prerogative of these deities to determine the onset and nature of any such encounter.

**The Dark Light Wine**

This unique personality profile of the poet who confronts the holy night of godlessness with daring and humility gains an added clarity when closer attention is paid
to the type of wine that fills the poet’s fragrant cup. The significance of the poet’s partaking of the fragrant cup was treated earlier. There the poet’s ability to effectively assimilate the various modes of temporality was noted in a general way. According to Heidegger, by the poet’s imbibing the wine of remembrance, poetic thinking is brought to its defining point and empowered to attentively integrate past, present and future:

When the poet calls out for a fragrant cup, he is asking to be confirmed in the essential law of his poetic activity, which is to think with one accord of what has been and of what is coming, instead of sleeping through the time which now is.48

Now, these broad temporal domains of past and future have a specific content and the ability to integrate them takes on an unprecedented exigency. The past is associated with gods who have fled and the God who was murdered, while the future is enlivened by the God or gods set to return. In any event it is a needy time of godlessness best symbolized as a dark holy night that reverentially shelters the no more gods/God of the past and conceals the not yet of the coming future gods/God. The possibility of encountering and accessing the illusory deities through this holy night is conceivable because it is the mother of the day. Thus the poet venturesomely braves the holy night with awe and hope as one who is comfortable with the potential of the twilight since the night has its own clarity. This is predicated on the basis of the wine that originally accords the poet her unique capabilities to meditatively encounter temporality, so that past and future are meaningfully brought together, instead of the poet merely inhabiting the present with a sleepy sense of contentment. The fragrant wine that enables the poet to exercise the very essence of poetic activity is of a unique color; it is “dark light.” Heidegger asserts, “The wine is named the dark light (das dunkel Licht).”49 The words in the third strophe of
Hölderlin’s “Remembrance” that inspire Heidegger’s thoughts bear repeating: “But someone pass me,/Full of dark light,/The fragrant cup.”

Savoring the dark light vintage allows the poet to be confirmed in her poetic calling in a most specific way. Beyond acquiring a temporal aplomb with past, present and future, the dark light wine of the fragrant cup also enables the poet to appreciate the unique clarity of the holy night. Both the poet and the sailor have been lauded for granting the night its own kind of clarity (eine Klarheit) worthy of exploration. However, now it becomes plain, for the poet at least, that it is her choice of wine that defines this clarity offered by the night.

What is most important about the clarity gained by the poet after taking in the dark light wine is the way in which it modifies the now well-known and important trait of venturesomeness. While the unique clarity that comes to the imbibing poet emboldens her venturesomeness to search for the missing gods/God in this needy time, it does so by instilling a concomitant sense of humility and unpretentiousness. Surrounded by the overwhelming nothingness, the venturesome poet can indeed indicate the traces or bright spots of the departed gods/dead God and those of the gods/God who are expected. However the clarity induced by the dark light wine challenges any tendency to smugness or over-confidence that the poet could develop after having bravely confronted the godless nothingness and successfully exposed the traces of the elusive deities. To overestimate the brightness of these blips could lead the poet to a false sense of self-importance. The poet must not lose sight of the fact that she acts as a mediator only. And while her venturesome spirit allows her to offer some privileged points of contact between humanity and the divinities in this needy time of their overwhelming absence, it
is an offering never fully accomplished on her terms or at her behest but rather at the initiative and discretion of the gods/God. To maintain this sense of priority and deference, the poet sips the fragrant cup of dark light wine to bravely welcome the night and respect its unique clarity. Véronique Fóti affirms Heidegger’s stance on the importance of the dark light wine of the poet to keep things in proper perspective: “His [Heidegger’s] interpretive decisions here are, first, to understand the ‘dark light’ in terms of the poet’s mediational role with respect to the holy…”50

The reaction produced by the poet’s dark light wine is at once similar to and dissimilar from other alcohol induced reactions. On the one hand, it produces a euphoric awareness with regard to the distinctive clarity of the holy night that is very much in alignment with the inspirational high attested to by many musicians and artists. With the thirst for the Muse quenched the right chords are played, the right words flow forth. On the other hand, this perceptual keenness never degenerates into a drunken stupor, whereby the elevated sense of awareness oversteps its bounds and creates a false illusion of clarity — a confident, brave venturesomeness turned into a deluded self-assured arrogance. Heidegger prefers to call the desired effect of the poet’s dark light wine intoxication and the state it avoids inebriation. He distinguishes accordingly: “… this filled cup does not produce a stupor. Its work is not to make one inebriated, but it does nevertheless make one intoxicated (Er soll nicht betrunken, wohl aber getrunken machen).”51

Intoxication by the dark light wine becomes the best condition for the poet in which to venturesomely meet the holy night of godlessness and point out the traces of the fled gods/dead God and those traces of the anticipated gods/God. However, there are
stages to this condition according to Heidegger that ease the poet into this encounter and maintain the all-important reverential respect for the nature of the clarity provided by any such experience. The preliminary phases of intoxication create a general state of consciousness necessary for any encounter with the divine — a de-centered and heightened sense of receptivity. Heidegger describes the initial effects of intoxication as provoking

that sublime elevation of mood wherein that single voice can be heard that sets a tone, and where those who are attuned to it may be led most resolutely beyond themselves... The intoxication confuses the senses so little, that it rather brings sobriety for the sublime (für das Hohe) and lets one think of this”.

Beyond these first effects that lay the groundwork, the intoxication produces a second level of reactions that take on greater specificity and become more characteristic of the poet. In other words, many could drink the dark light wine to the point of intoxication and begin to feel moved to an experience with the sublime. But only the poet specifically requests the fragrant cup full of dark light wine as a gesture of confirmation for her very vocation. Any ensuing intoxication has a complementary effect and so contributes to the advancement of the poetic mission. At its broadest level, treated earlier, the poet is called to enjoy a temporal fluency whereby her poetic, meditative thinking brings together past, present and future. In this current needy time this wide-ranging mandate finds a more explicit expression in the challenge of godlessness that implicates the generalized modes of past and the future — the gods who have fled/the God who has been murdered in the past and the gods/God yet to come in the future. The parameters of the poetic vocation now become clearly delineated as she venturesomely confronts the dark night of godlessness in order to point out traces of the elusive deities. The initial effects of the intoxication brought on by the dark light wine greatly enhance the poet’s ability to
indicate any such traces as it elevates the mood and lets her “think of” the sublime (Hohe). The lingering effects of the intoxication, however, are more far reaching and give ultimate shape to the poetic calling. Beginning to come under the influence of the dark light wine, the poet’s venturesome spirit is quickened so as to withstand the dark night of overwhelming godlessness with a confident resolve that even the slightest and most fleeting traces of the gods/God of the past and the gods/God of the future can be shown. But as the poet continues to hoist the fragrant cup and the level of intoxication increases, the ultimate effect of the dark light wine is realized. Her mood is not merely prepared for a greater receptivity to glimpses of the sublime — the elusive deities (past and future) tracking about in a dark holy night — but instead the intoxication cultivates an understanding for the kind of clarity operative in those bright traces left by the gods/God at night. This unique clarity neutralizes any temptations the poet might have to rest content in the accomplishments of her venturesome spirit. Undoubtedly this spirit — enhanced by the intoxicating effects of the dark light wine — enabled the poet to withstand the seeming black night of godlessness in order to eek out some brightness evidenced by divine traces. But it is the very nature of the brightness that keeps the role of the poet in proper perspective and thus establishes her as the best mediator between the divine and human in this needy time.

Heidegger’s reflections on Hölderlin’s familiar words in the third stanza of “Remembrance” give way to an important description of the inner-workings between the brightness and clarity that come to the poet intoxicated by the dark light wine. When Hölderlin recounts the poet’s request, “But someone pass me,/Full of dark light,/The fragrant cup,” Heidegger proposes:
The wine is named the dark light. Thus at the same time the poet asks for the light of brightness which contributes to clarity… The dark light does not deny clarity; rather it is the excess of brightness which, the greater it is, denies sight all the more decisively… Sheer brightness is a greater danger to the poet’s presentation, because the brightness leads to the illusion that in its appearance alone there can be sight. The poet asks for the gift of the dark light in which the brightness is tempered and softened.53

From this comes a better appreciation of the clarity of the bright traces of divine presence indicated by the intoxicated poet against a vast backdrop of dark godlessness. The dark light wine reveals in its very name the ability it has to keep in proper tension the seeming oppositional forces of dark and light. Somehow as the poet quaffs this wine she is able to realize the value of the unique clarity that regulates the brightness level of the gods’/God’s traces. The clarity of the poet’s bright traces does not seek the full manifestation of divine presence by a complete intoxication of the overarching darkness of divine absence. This, for Heidegger, would be an illusion of clarity and a sign that the desired state of intoxication had slid into a more delusional state of inebriation. The brightness of these traces and the poet’s charge to point them out are both held in proper check by the intoxicating effects of the dark light wine. The clarity produced by the wine aims to soften and temper the brightness of the divine traces and also helps the poet to maintain an attitude of humble reverence with regard to her interaction with these traces. On this latter score, Heidegger calls the clarity induced by the dark light wine a “Sobriety without pretentiousness.”54 Pretense or any similar attitudinal disposition could lead the poet to misconstrue the prospects of the divine traces whose brightness is tempered and softened. While an initial reaction to any suggestion to dull the brightness of godly traces might seem counterproductive or damaging to a more direct encounter with the gods/God, it is Heidegger’s judgment that the full effects of the intoxicating clarity will be felt so that a respect for the genuine promise and potential of the darkness can be
realized: “This intoxication lifts one into the illuminating clarity in which the depths of
the concealed are opened up and darkness appears as the sister of clarity.”\textsuperscript{55}

What stands out as Heidegger continues to be inspired by Hölderlin’s rich
imagery concerning the poet is an undeniably clear challenge to the typical remedies
offered in reaction to the disturbing awareness of divine elusiveness and even worse
divine absence. One usual solution would be sought by following the dictates of
“calculative” thinking discussed in chapter one. There it was shown how Heidegger
believes that calculative thinking represents the dominant thinking of the West, since it is
most compatible with the outlook and aims of scientism and technology. As this thinking
over the centuries has focused on the thought of beings which can be seen, quantified,
manipulated and controlled, the thought of Being itself remained impoverished with its
most special feature of self-concealment completely ignored and unappreciated.
Nonetheless, “Being loves to hide itself,” a point Heraclitus made long ago, but for
Heidegger was a truism never heeded and embraced because it was more comfortable for
Western calculative thinking to concentrate on the manifesting dynamic of Being most
palpable in beings.

This general challenge with regard to Being and the 2,500 year history of
defective thinking given its greatest impetus by metaphysics now has a specific
theological application. This can be achieved without inflicting any damage on the
integrity of Heidegger’s philosophy, since there is no attempt to merely substitute the
gods/the God of current interest with the Being of Heidegger’s overarching concern.
Instead, this careful application fully respects Heidegger’s well-known chain of sequence
outlining the path to God vis-à-vis Being:
Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy is the essence of the divinity to be thought. Only in the light of the essence of divinity can it be thought or said what the word “God” is to signify.56

If an important though much neglected truth concerning the meaning of Being is that it prefers to conceal and hide itself, then it is safe to make the well accepted theological assertion under Heideggerian auspices that the gods and God opt for a self-concealing at certain times. Representative of this well-established theological tenet is Blaise Pascal and his familiar dictum, “A religion which does not affirm that God is hidden is not true. Vere tu es Deus absconditus!”57

Though Heidegger would never give an outright endorsement to this and many other credible theological sources which lend credence to God’s penchant for hiding, he nonetheless does something very close through the inspired words of Hölderlin concerning the kind of clarity emitted by the bright traces of the fled gods/dead God and the gods/God of anticipation. The venturesome poet intoxicated by the dark light wine points out these traces against an overwhelming dark night background of godless nothingness. She does so with a sense of appreciation for the clarity produced by the brightness of these traces. In other words, the immensity of the dark night and the intensity of the blackness are not forces to be dispelled so that the bright traces of the deities can eventually realize their refulgent glory. Instead, as suggested by Heidegger, “The poet asks for the gift of the dark light in which the brightness is tempered and softened.” And while this may at first glance seem to be a capitulation to the black night of godlessness and a testament to the anemic brightness of the residual traces left by the gods/God, it is actually neither a concession nor a resigned acceptance of weakness. Instead of attempting to obliterate the black darkness of the godless night, the intoxicated
The poet sees the darkness as an opportunity for her bright traces to realize their clarity in a respectful way. Heidegger writes:

> this softening does not weaken the light of brightness. For the darkness permits the appearance of that which conceals, and thus in its appearing preserves what is concealed within. The darkness preserves in the light the fullness of what it has to bestow in its shining appearance.  

Ironically, then, the real foe of poetic clarity during this time of godlessness and the force which would hinder the poet’s ability to indicate some genuine trace of godly presence is not the daunting black darkness of night, but rather its very elimination and replacement by a daylight of all pervasive radiance. As counter intuitive as this may be, Heidegger presses on with the following challenge:

> The poet of course sees an illumination which comes to appearance through its darkness. The dark light does not deny clarity; rather, it is the excess of brightness which, the greater it is, denies sight all the more decisively. The all-too-flaming fire does not just blind the eyes; rather, its excessive brightness also engulfs everything that shows itself and is darker than darkness itself. Sheer brightness is a greater danger to the poet’s presentation, because the brightness leads to the illusion that in its appearance alone there can be sight. The poet asks for the gift of the dark light... 

Therefore, the poet under the influence of the dark light wine works with the darkness of the godless night as she points out the bright traces of divine presence. It is an ongoing collaboration, since her aim in pointing out these bright traces is not to have them evolve into an illuminating force that completely dispels all darkness, whereby constant immediate access to the divine is established. Instead, the poet is a mediator between the gods/God and humanity and stands in awe of the divine prerogative for self-concealment in the darkness. It is not a matter of promoting the virtue of the traces and reveling in their brightness as the definitive experience of the gods/God. It is more a matter of humbly pointing these traces out while realizing all the while that it is the source of their emanation — the dark night of godlessness — that ultimately determines the nature and
scope of any human-divine encounter. There is a need to preserve the darkness and accept its agenda to emit any bright traces of the gods/God that the poet is able to point out — “For the darkness permits the appearance of that which conceals…”

The poet protects the darkness and values it as the true yet mysterious source for encounters with the divine because in a like way the night and its darkness are protective of the gods/God. This was discussed in passing earlier when attempting to discern the true nature of the godlessness associated with the needy time of the gods’/God’s double absence — the past gods/God who have fled and the future gods/God who are yet to draw near. There the sheltering or protective nature of the dark of night was overlooked. Now however, this acquires a deeper meaning when seen in tandem with the extent to which the poet strives to protect the night for its godly potential. Heidegger’s words can be recalled:

Night is the time of the sheltering (die Bergung) of the gods of the past and of the concealment (die Verbergung) of the gods that are coming. Because the night, in such sheltering-concealing (bergend-Verbergenden) darkness, is not nothing, it also has its own vast clarity and the peacefulness of the silent preparation for something which is coming.60

With a blood level alcohol content spiked by dark light wine the poet protects, values, esteems the night because it in turn protects and shelters its hidden potential for divine revelation. However it is Heidegger’s belief that even with intoxication maintained at its desired and proper level, the poet’s venturesome spirit for the dark may soon be put to the test. Despite the divine instances of brightness that shine forth in and from the darkness, thus giving continual evidence of the night’s unique clarity in darkness, a certain stamina will be required to stay with the night, to protect the night, that may not be possible for even the most well disposed poet under the influence of the dark light
wine. According to Heidegger’s frank observations, “No doubt the length of this night can at times exceed human powers to the point that one wishes to sink away into sleep.”61

Nietzsche’s Mad Search for the Dead God

It is as if a different or even more severe altered state of consciousness is needed if the poet is not going to be overcome by the challenges associated with her duty to point out the bright traces of the gods/God, doing so all the while with constant realization that it is from and through a surrounding dark night of godlessness that all her activity takes place. Can continuing to work from this perspective and under these conditions lead to a breaking point of frustration, not readily relieved by recourse to the fragrant cup of dark light wine? Or does the stress of having to continually point out traces of elusive deities drive the poet to overindulge in the dark light wine to a point where a proper intoxication becomes an inebriation of stupefaction? Whatever the case, enduring this night of godlessness can take its toll on the emotional well-being of even the most venturesome poet. If the pressure does not break the spirit of the poet so that she opts to sleep through the dark night instead of keeping a nurturative vigilance for any bright godlike glimpses, there is another outlet. Driven to the brink of insanity the poet’s vigilance through the night is transformed into a frenzied insomniac search for the elusive gods/God in the bright light of daybreak. This is certainly the impact that living in a godless night had upon another figure who greatly piqued Heidegger’s later interest — the madman of Nietzsche’s The Gay Science who announced God’s death: “Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran into the market place, and cried incessantly: ‘I seek God! I seek God!’”62
Heidegger’s acceptance of the state of madness and the very figure of the madman was well established in the previous chapter. At different points there it was shown that those tormented by some kind of mental affliction are not to be shunned or relegated to the margins in accordance with standard reactions. Instead, it was Heidegger’s stance that madness was a complementary condition well suited to fully execute several aspects of poetic activity. Whether prompting the wandering stranger to enter into the between of the ontological difference (Trakl) or facilitating the poet’s measure-taking to achieve a rooted dwelling (Hölderlin), it was Heidegger’s conviction that some accompanying madness as personified by the madman (der Wahnsinnige) would clinch a successful outcome. It is his otherness and the ability to observe and critique from an alternative perspective that grants him the advantage of maintaining an atypical clarity and calmness in certain situations: “From that other direction, his madness (sein Wahnsinn) may be called ‘gentle,’ for his mind pursues a greater stillness.”

With no intention to disesteem the poetic activities of entering into the between and measure-taking greatly advanced under the madman’s guidance discussed in chapter three, there is a notable shift in urgency surrounding the activities of Nietzsche’s madman. In other words, searching for God and announcing God’s death are very weighty endeavors and call for a different degree of madness. This important nuance is detected by examining the original German texts and through comparison discovering Heidegger’s varying word choice to speak of the intensities of madness attending poetic activity on the one hand and God seeking on the other. The English translations gloss over this distinction by using the same word “mad” to qualify the entering into the
between, taking measure and searching for God. The work of Silke-Maria Weineck is instructive here. After closely studying the German of Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science*, which is the basis for Heidegger’s reflections, Weineck makes it clear that the madness indicated there is not *Wahnsinn* but *Irrsinn*: “It is here that Nietzsche finally gives a definition of madness, not as *Wahnsinn*, however, but as *Irrsinn*: ‘the eruption of arbitrariness in feeling, seeing, and hearing, the enjoyment of the mind’s lack of discipline, the joy in human unreason.’”

Heidegger’s earlier use of *Wahnsinn* has thus been eclipsed by *Irrsinn*. The need for a bit of non-threatening otherness that will enable the poet to take a slightly different route so that she can accomplish various poetic chores becomes a radical otherness that steers one completely off the map. Again the insights of Weineck regarding *Irrsinn* and its cognates are valuable:

*Irrsinn*, in contrast, suggests not only error, as in *Irrtum*, but a wondering mind, one that strays from the path: *irren*, to drift, to stray, *sich verirren*, to get lost... *Irrsinn* implies a dynamic and unlimited deviation, like travel in an unmarked desert, a failure to walk the established paths of reason as well as to create new paths, a failure to arrive.

Searching for God after she has been pronounced dead calls for drastic measures and a frame of mind equally suited to the challenge. This reaches its ultimate expression in the marked change in vocabulary. Heidegger’s choice of *Wahnsinn* to describe the madness of the madman (*Wahnsinnige*) set about to pursue poetic duties with a quiet, gentle manner of otherness is transformed into *Irrsinn*, where the madman becomes *der tolle Mensch* whose search for God calls for extremes. Weineck goes on to explain this dual shift in terminology which more adequately depicts the new level of madness and its personality manifestations: “The madman who mourns the death of God is *der tolle Mensch* where *toll* connotes not only madness but a frantic, furious, and destructive
quality: a dog with rabies is *toll* (English uses ‘mad dog’ in much the same way, but the implication is much stronger in the more specific German term *toll*)."66

Coming to appreciate these fine points of Nietzschean phraseology has great bearing for any attempt to understand the aim of Heidegger’s reflections on Nietzsche’s death of God theme. Most specifically, it is invaluable to be cognizant of the frantic and furious character of the madman’s reaction to God’s death. Because for Heidegger it is only by paying attention to the tone which expresses the madman’s affect that one can arrive at the crux of Nietzsche’s assertion that God is dead. In other terms, an informed sense of what Nietzsche’s madman means when he declares God’s death is derived from an attentiveness to how he speaks about this matter. As only a mad man (*tolle Mensch*) can, he speaks with a tenor of frenzy and fury which should not go unnoticed or dismissed according to Heidegger:

> In order to pay heed to it and to learn to pay heed, it can be enough for us simply to ponder for once what the madman says about the death of God and *how* he says it. Perhaps we will no longer pass by so quickly without hearing what is said at the beginning of the passage that has been elucidated: that the madman “cried incessantly: I seek God! I seek God! (Ich suche Gott! Ich suche Gott!).”67

Heidegger’s urgings to pay attention to the tonal quality of the subtext surrounding the announcement of God’s death is especially important for the current project eager to find theological moorings. Most specifically, the realization that the death of God is fully comprehensible only in relation to a fast and frenzied search for God bodes well for any theological enterprise. This in turn is an enactment of the advice offered at the outset of this chapter to not dismiss Nietzsche outright, but rather to attempt to see what he saw. As odious as Nietzsche’s death of God doctrine may be to theological ears, it is softened quite extensively when placed in the full textual context depicting a madman quite vexed by his own declarations and desperately looking for God.
But this is how Heidegger saw Nietzsche himself and evaluated his otherwise theologically alienating assertions. Heidegger perceived Nietzsche as someone who was looking for God and the madman in *The Gay Science* becomes merely an alter ego expressive of this search and yearning. Weineck supports Heidegger’s conviction that the God seeking madman is an extension of the true Nietzsche who rarely finds a sympathetic welcome in most theological quarters. She writes, “Nietzsche’s madman is a narrative persona, a fictional voice in which Nietzsche, the master of many voices, writes.”68 Indeed there are many voices of Nietzsche, and some without question instantly foreclose any rapprochement with theology. It is hard enough for theology to embrace Nietzsche’s writings when they so vehemently attack the most vaunted Christian virtues, i.e. love, humility, temperance, self-renunciation. But it is Nietzsche’s specific excoriations aimed at theologians, priests and any official representatives of Christianity that do the most to inhibit theological receptivity. Luijpen has made the following helpful observation, though his equating of priests and theologians is a bit archaic: “Nietzsche’s torrent of abuse is inexhaustible when he pours out his hatred toward priests, for they are the bearers of Christianity — ‘He who seeks a criterion for truth has merely to go to the theologians and turn their value judgments upside down.”69

Here is where Heidegger offers great potential for theology. As a philosopher he is not initially stunned by Nietzsche’s rantings and put off by his *ad hominem* hurled at professional theologians. He instead lets Nietzsche’s other voices be heard and as a more objective mediator can present those that are of theological merit with better effectiveness than Nietzsche himself. In several instances of his later works, Heidegger makes it clear that Nietzsche should be seen as someone who is seriously looking for God. In an address
delivered on the occasion of his assumption of the rector’s office at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau in 1933, Heidegger said:

\[
\text{And if, indeed, our ownmost being (}\text{Dasein}\text{) itself stands before a great transformation, if what }\text{that passionate seeker of God }\text{and the last German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, said is true: “God is dead” — and if we have to face up to the forsakenness of modern man in the midst of what is, what then is the situation of science?}^{70}
\]

In a similar vein, Nietzsche’s authenticity as an indefatigable searcher is underscored in a lecture on Nietzsche’s doctrine of the eternal recurrence:

\[
\text{We dare not confuse Nietzsche with such “god-less” ones, who cannot really even be “god-less” because they have never struggled to find a god, and never can. Yet if Nietzsche is no atheist in the usual sense, we dare not falsify him as a “sentimental,” “romantic,” halfway-Christian “God seeker.”}^{71}
\]

What Heidegger is able to do that is of theological worth is to leave the door open for the study of Nietzsche. As long as Heidegger couples any discussion of the death of God with a discussion of a search for God, then how can theology justly preclude any possible dialogue with Nietzsche? As was stated in the opening pages of this chapter, a thinker of Nietzsche’s magnitude did see something and if theology can benefit from the entrée provided by Heidegger to at least one vista, then theology is seeing what Nietzsche saw with potential enrichment as the final result. This author believes that many theologians will be open to dialogue with Nietzsche and will try to see what he saw as long as he is not seen as advocating a brazen atheism when the issue of God’s death arises in his writings. Again, there is no attempt to white wash Nietzsche and deny his many vitriolic charges against religion, specifically Christianity, but if he is not promoting an out-and-out atheism when discussing the death of God, then he still deserves a fair hearing in the court of theology. And Heidegger’s going to great length to
highlight the figure of Nietzsche’s madman who simultaneously declares God’s murder and seeks God’s presence ensures such a hearing.

It becomes possible to discuss God’s death in a non-threatening way for theology once atheism is not seen as the only eventual result. So when Heidegger broaches the delicate topic of the death of God in Nietzsche he is not put off by the initial shock effect that seems to provoke atheistic sentiment. Instead, as just discussed he places any consideration about God’s demise on the lips of Nietzsche’s madman in the context of a concurrent search for God. Moreover, Heidegger puts the madman’s declaration and yearning into an even wider relief in order to diffuse the fate suffered by many of Nietzsche’s more outlandish claims. Prior to launching into a close reading of the scene of the madman in the marketplace from *The Gay Science*, Heidegger situates Nietzsche’s treatment of God’s death within the entire span of Western philosophy or metaphysics:

What is important to us now is the reflection pertaining to Nietzsche’s metaphysics. Nietzsche’s thinking sees itself under the heading “nihilism.” That is the name for a historical movement, recognized by Nietzsche, already ruling throughout the preceding centuries, and now determining this century. Nietzsche sums up his interpretation of it in the brief statement: “God is dead.” … The following reflections attempt to elucidate Nietzsche’s pronouncement in a few essential respects. Once again let it be emphasized: The word of Nietzsche speaks of the destiny of two millennia of Western history.⁷²

Even with this suggestion to view Nietzsche’s concern for God’s death against the vast backdrop of Western philosophy, the details of which will be discussed below, Heidegger is well aware that there will still be a rush to label this as an attempt to promote an atheistic agenda. Heidegger explains,

One could suppose that the pronouncement “God is dead” expresses an opinion of Nietzsche the atheist and is accordingly only a personal attitude, and therefore one-sided… But the question remains whether the aforesaid word of Nietzsche is merely an extravagant view of a thinker about whom the correct assertion is readily at hand: he finally went mad.⁷³
It is the extravagance of Nietzsche’s statement that God is dead, especially from a theological perspective, that has just the right shock value to consign anything he says before and after to the realm of atheistic rhetoric. But Heidegger goads all readers of Nietzsche, including those with theological interests, to apply hermeneutical discretion to this otherwise disconcerting statement that God is dead:

Before taking any position too hastily, we must first try to think this pronouncement, “God is dead,” in the way in which it is intended. To that end, therefore, we would do well to put aside all premature opinions that immediately obtrude for us at this dreadful word.74

Heidegger is therefore addressing one of the perennial pitfalls that stymies much of Nietzschean interpretation with regard to his more extravagant remarks. To heed Heidegger’s admonitions to think what Nietzsche really intended when he espoused God’s death and to put aside any prejudicial opinions proves to be difficult because of the statement’s very extravagance. A hermeneutical template is called for that goes beyond the mere interpretive goal to find the meaning of what Nietzsche said and instead to discern his true conviction for his own assertions. When Nietzsche pronounces the death of God it must be asked to what degree he really means this, instead of, what does he mean. This hermeneutical insight is advanced by the Nietzsche scholar Robert C. Solomon, who insists that Nietzsche’s style requires the reader to walk an extra interpretive mile in order to arrive at any meaningful destination. He writes:

Nietzsche was a brilliant and ferocious stylist, who rarely backed away from even the most outrageous overstatements and accusations. He consequently invited all sorts of wild interpretations that went far beyond what he could have conceived or proposed. It is evident that Nietzsche intended to shock and provoke us and jar us into critical self-examination. What is not so clear is how we should take the many outrageous things he seems to say… Thus the primary problem in reading Nietzsche is not trying to understand what he means… His sentences are admirably clear and concrete, and colorful besides. The primary problem in reading Nietzsche is trying to figure out to what extent he really means what he seems to be saying.75
The way in which Nietzsche presents the death of God in *The Gay Science* passage certainly fits into the category of the outrageous, especially when the vignette about the madman’s visit to the marketplace unfolds and it is learned that God has been murdered. Adding to the drama are the taunts of the surly crowd in the marketplace that irreverently make light of the madman’s search for God and the eventual announcement of God’s death. True to his own hermeneutical provisos, Heidegger aims to find Nietzsche’s true intentions and to suspend any preconceptions in order not to be thrown off by all this outrageousness. For his part, Heidegger never saw in these passages featuring God’s death a platform to promote atheism. In other places Heidegger clearly expresses what he perceives to be Nietzsche’s true convictions when he writes about the death of God: “‘God is dead’… The proposition has nothing to do with the assertion of an ordinary atheism.”76 The recent scholarship of Tracy Colony provides another interesting reference overlooked for decades that supports Heidegger’s efforts to gauge Nietzsche’s true intentions. In reculling through the original manuscripts of Heidegger’s voluminous Nietzsche lectures, Colony discovered that three pages were omitted in the final published English translation of a lecture titled “Platonism and Nihilism.” A portion of this omission directly addresses the issue at hand:

> The common interpretation of Nietzsche’s expression “God is dead” is that Nietzsche states unequivocally: the only possible standpoint today is atheism. But exactly the opposite, and more is Nietzsche’s actual position.77

If something completely different from atheism lurks behind Nietzsche’s real intentions when proposing the death of God, then from a Heideggerian point of view there is an outreach to theology that is made possible, surprising as it may seem. Two contemporary scholars from diverse perspectives and with different purposes in mind
lend support to Heidegger’s position. Merold Westphal’s fresh study of atheism and religion bolsters Heidegger’s suggestion and does so from an explicitly theological viewpoint. According to Westphal, it is the Nietzschean doctrine of “resentment” that poses the greatest threat to any détente with theology. It is beyond the scope of this work to fully develop Nietzsche’s theory of resentment, but it is instructive at this point to realize that the sources which actually support his atheistic tendencies do so in more subtle and indirect ways. In Westphal’s assessment,

Nietzsche calls the First Part of The Genealogy of Morals, in which he gives his most extensive account of this distinction [master morality versus slave morality] and especially of the emergence of slave morality, his account of “the birth of Christianity out of the spirit of ressentiment!” In other words, it is here, rather than in Nietzsche’s periodic announcements of the death of God that his critique of religion is to be found.78

The postmodern philosopher Gianni Vattimo is much more direct in his affirmation of Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche and the resulting positive theological fall out: “Nietzsche’s announcement that ‘God is dead’ is not an atheistic thesis like ‘God does not exist’.” Writing autobiographically, Vattimo explains how he was able to appropriate Christianity anew, not with the well established credo “I believe in God,” but with the alternative “I believe that I believe in God.” He maintains that he was able to arrive at a restored relationship to Christianity because of Nietzsche and Heidegger.

A logical question thus arises. If Nietzsche’s fixation with God’s death is not an atheistic diatribe which would perforce exclude the possibility of any conversation with theology, then more positively what is it? In attempting an answer, what must be kept in mind initially is the broad philosophical relief into which Heidegger inserts Nietzsche’s announcement that God is dead. It was shown above, as one effort to build a bridge to theology, how Heidegger sees God’s death in Nietzsche’s program as one philosophical
tenet caught up in the grand scheme of Western philosophy’s 2,500 year history. From this standpoint Heidegger explains the meaning of Nietzsche’s death of God:

> The pronouncement “God is dead” means: The suprasensory world is without effective power. It bestows no life. Metaphysics, i.e., for Nietzsche Western philosophy understood as Platonism, is at an end. Nietzsche understands his own philosophy as the counter-movement to metaphysics, and that means in opposition to Platonism.80

As was seen in chapter one, the end of metaphysics was also a major concern for Heidegger. But it was not Nietzsche who succeeded in bringing about the renewal of Western philosophy, as he was according to Heidegger the last great metaphysician. Philosophy could meet with much more success at overcoming itself by adopting Heidegger’s recommendations, some of which were outlined in chapter one as points of Heidegger’s unique contribution to philosophy. Even if Nietzsche did not succeed in bringing an end to metaphysics, connecting its possibility to the death of God had a very far reaching effect upon Western humanity. Heidegger continues:

> If God as the suprasensory ground and goal of all reality is dead, if the suprasensory world of the Ideas has suffered the loss of its obligatory and above all its vitalizing and upbuilding power, then nothing more remains to which man can cling and by which he can orient himself.81

With eloquence and objectivity, Vattimo is able to demystify Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche and also to judge Heidegger’s corresponding contribution to the matter at hand.

> In sum, for Nietzsche “God is dead” means nothing else than the fact that there is no ultimate foundation. An analogous meaning... is found in Heidegger’s polemics against metaphysics — the whole European philosophical tradition from Parmenides on — which believes itself capable of grasping the ultimate foundation of reality in the form of an objective structure like an essence or a mathematical truth, which is given outside of time.82

> In the effort to see the very broad context into which Heidegger fits Nietzsche’s atheism, it is important not to lose sight of the human implications that Heidegger also indicates. In other words, two attempts have been made thus far to fend off any quick
dismissal of Nietzsche’s “God is dead” proclamation as a sanction for irreligious atheism. First, Heidegger highlighted the fact that Nietzsche’s madman puzzles over God’s death while simultaneously conducting a search for God. More will be said on this below. Second, as was just presented, Heidegger renders Nietzsche’s “God is dead” declaration promising by assigning it to the watershed moment of antifoundationalism in Western thought. And it is this attempt that is most prone to losing touch with the human dimensions involved in Nietzsche’s assertions that Heidegger wants to forestall.

The challenge arising here is primarily the result of an attempt to make theological applications. On the one hand, there is the need to properly situate Nietzsche’s wont to talk about God’s death in order to properly detoxify it. But by showing its conceptual merit at a particular phase in philosophy’s history and so numbing its initial anti-theological sting, there is a danger of making it all too abstract. Consigning Nietzsche’s death of God preoccupation exclusively to the realm of philosophical concerns takes away the atheistic virulence but at the expense of neutralizing the human implications that could be of great interest to theology. However, Heidegger permits such theological investigations to ensue by the balanced way in which he defines Nietzsche’s statements concerning God’s death. This was indicated above in both instances where he interpreted Nietzsche’s phrase “God is dead” as symptomatic of the suprasensory world’s decline. No longer is there a rigorous unbending order of Objective Truth able to hold the center firm. But this metaphysical inability has very down-to-earth human consequences as Heidegger explained “The suprasensory world is without effective power. It bestows no life… if the suprasensory world of the Ideas has suffered the loss of its obligatory and
above all its vitalizing [inspiring] and upbuilding [constructive] power, then nothing more remains to which man can cling and by which he can orient himself.”

The richness of these passages to convey the existential significance of God’s death could have been easily overlooked when cited above. There the primary effort was to connect Nietzsche’s interest in God’s demise with antifoundationalism. With a second look, however, Heidegger’s imagery allows for a more extensive interpretation. As detached and lofty as the phrase “God is dead” becomes when seen in light of the suprasensory world’s failure to provide a foundation for all of reality, it is Heidegger’s aim to immediately associate it with challenges confronting lived human experience: If the suprasensory world no longer has effective power, then “it does not bestow life.” Likewise, if the suprasensory world is bereft of its binding power, then it no longer possesses its “inspiring/vitalizing” and constructive force which humans can turn to for meaning and direction in life: “nothing more remains to which man can cling and by which he can orient himself.”

But Heidegger goes even a step further. Not only must Nietzsche’s concern for God’s death be seen in light of the antifoundationalism resulting from the collapse of the suprasensory world of absolute truths, which has a direct bearing on the human search for meaning. It is the mode of this very search as theologically conditioned that must also not go unnoticed. Heidegger, therefore, specifies the depth of disorientation that the human person struggles with when living in a world devoid of the foundations provided by the suprasensory world. The deep sense of arid meandering could be remedied by a faithfilled stance before a God who is more than an abstract restored suprasensory world which lays new foundations. Heidegger expressly names the theological virtues of faith
and love as able to alleviate the human distress of living in the postmodern world. As a minority stance, however, it will experience meager results at best. He writes:

That which formerly conditioned and determined the essence of man in the manner of purpose and norm has lost its unconditional and immediate, above all its ubiquitously and infallibly operative power of effective action. That suprasensory world of purposes and norms no longer quickens [inspires] and supports life. That world has become lifeless, dead. There will be Christian faith here and there. But the love holding sway in that world is not the effectively working and operative principle of what is happening now.\textsuperscript{84}

Heidegger, therefore, becomes a surprising yet welcome bridge between theology and philosophy with regard to Nietzsche’s considerations of God’s death. Theology is extended an initial invitation when the philosophical interpretation of antifoundationalism is advanced against ordinary claims of atheism. Then a more sustained theological exploration ensues once it is realized that the abstract philosophical understanding has a profound impact on human existence with theological reverberations. This important connection for theology advanced by the Nietzschean interpretation of the philosopher Heidegger finds an echo of support in the Nietzschean interpretation of the theologian Alistair Kee: “For Nietzsche, to lose religious beliefs is to lose the foundations of life itself: truth, moral values and aesthetic judgment.”\textsuperscript{85}

With a better grasp of the interpretive flow that results from Heidegger’s appropriation of Nietzsche’s phrase “God is dead,” it becomes possible to detect a great irony that gives substance to the early claim concerning Nietzsche’s madman who simultaneously announces God’s death and seeks after Her presence nonetheless. The irony is apparent from the final outcome of Heidegger’s interpretive journey. A statement that would otherwise stop all theological discussion by its very utterance — “God is dead!” — comes around full circle to be a statement which stimulates unending
theological debate. Heidegger reacts to Nietzsche’s more philosophical appraisal of
God’s death by showing the deeper human consequences of torpor and lack of purpose.

Though with a very different purpose in mind, Heidegger’s interpretive course
can be seen here as following the logical pattern found in Jean-Paul Sartre’s well-known
reflections on God’s death. After pondering the novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky’s statement “If
God didn’t exist, everything would be possible,” Sartre concludes in a way similar to
Heidegger’s assessment of the final outcome of the disempowerment of the suprasensory
world. Sartre explains his reaction:

The existentialist… thinks it very distressing that God does not exist, because all possibility of finding values in a heaven of ideas disappears along with Him; there can be no longer an a priori [prior to human experience] Good, since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it. Nowhere is it written that the Good exists, that we must be honest, that we must not lie; because the fact is we are on a plane where there are only men. Dostoevsky said, “If God didn’t exist, everything would be possible.” That is the very starting point of existentialism. Indeed, everything is permissible if God does not exist, and as a result man is forlorn, because neither within him nor without does he find anything to cling to.86

The similarities here with Heidegger are unmistakable. Both thinkers identify the final
consequences of God’s death in very human terms. On the one hand, it has been shown
how Heidegger reacts to Nietzsche’s consideration of God’s death by placing it in the
context of philosophy as a statement signaling the end of the suprasensory world. While
an amiable enough partial solution to stave off any blatant charges of atheism, Heidegger
does not wish to stop here. Instead, he immediately proceeds to underscore the existential
fall out: “nothing more remains to which man can cling and by which he can orient
himself.” He then goes even farther to indicate that any corrective to this human plight
will be found not in philosophy’s debate over the reestablishment of foundations but in
theology’s convictions that meaningful encounters between humanity and God are real
possibilities. On the other hand, Sartre maps out a more direct route from God’s death to existential challenge. If God no longer exists human beings are forlorn, because, reminiscent of Heidegger’s imagery, there is nothing for them “to cling to”.

But aside from the similarity of both thinkers to show the alienating effect that God’s death has upon human existence, there is sharp divergence as to where this alienation leads and how or whether it should be resolved. Completely lacking in Sartre is any recourse back to God in contrast with Heidegger’s suggestion that Christian faith and its promulgation of love could be curative to the malaise resulting from the dismantling of the suprasensory world’s influence. Sartre opts to heighten the alienation by placing the entire burden of God’s departure on the shoulders of humanity: “we are on a plane where there are only men.” In a very radical way, Sartre responds to God’s death by replacing Her with humanity. Because that is such an awesome burden the sense of alienation intensifies to a feeling of despair, a point not missed by Macquarrie in his investigation of alienation and iconoclastic forms of atheism: “Our brief survey of the history of the concept of alienation has in fact suggested that atheism is no cure, but rather brings in its train even more severe forms of estrangement. We have seen clear evidence for this in the philosophy of...Sartre.” In his study of the ethical impact of Sartre’s absorption in death of God thought, Charles Guignon accents Macquarrie’s observations. He identifies the severe form of estrangement or alienation as abandonment, since humanity has replaced God as the source for values which could legitimize its conduct. If God no longer exists to cling to in order to guide and judge human decisions as blameworthy or praiseworthy, then human beings are alone and according to Guignon’s reading of Sartre they “are thrown back onto themselves in a
radical way. We are ultimately self-creating, with ‘no excuses behind us, nor justification before us.’”

Heidegger takes aim at the Sartrean position, not because of the serious existential implications that result from a confrontation with God’s death or absence, but rather because of the related tenet that a pervasive mood of forlornness permeates all reactions in their final stages, whether expressed as despair, alienation, or abandonment. This is the end result only if human beings view God’s death as a mandate for them to assume all the roles He once performed. To think that humans must step in and replace the dead God is a complete misreading of Nietzsche according to Heidegger. While it is incumbent upon humanity to search for and be receptive to possible replacements for God, they could never be found in humankind itself. As Heidegger explains his position on the absurdity that a human being could replace God, he not only adds to his interpretation of Nietzsche’s interest in God’s death and clarifies Nietzsche’s concept of the Overman (der Übermensch), but he also shows a marked theological sensitivity:

“Dead are all gods: now we will that overman live!”

We could believe, were we thinking crassly, that this pronouncement says that dominion over all that is, is passing from God to man or, even more crassly, that Nietzsche puts man in place of God. Those who believe thus do not, of course, think in a very godly way about the divine essence (denken allerdings wenig göttlich von Gottes Wesen). Never can man put himself in the place of God, because the essence of man never reaches the essential realm belonging to God.

Heidegger thus quickly checks any death of God musings that usher in a new age of human mastery and supremacy — an enactment of sorts of Protagoras’ expression that “man is the measure of all things.” Instead there is something that must be respected about God’s essence as belonging only to God, and any human attempt to enter into this realm and occupy it in order to see as God sees is a completely misguided effort to address the challenges of God’s seeming absence. Luijpen lends credibility to
Heidegger’s interpretation by observing that: “For Heidegger, the death of ‘God’ does not mean that man substitutes himself for God. That would be mere foolishness.”

But if humankind is not a suitable replacement for the dead God, Heidegger is nonetheless convinced that a replacement is possible. The effort then becomes to discern his rationale for maintaining such a position and how this relates to theology. What will become apparent in order to entice those theological temperaments easily put off by suggestions of God’s replacement is that the search for the right replacement eventuates in a positive outcome for the theology of God. First, however, there must be an appreciation of Heidegger’s insistence for a replacement and what motivates his resolve. Heidegger’s position on replacement as the fitting reaction to Nietzsche’s deliberations over God’s death comes through forcefully in the following remarks:

if God in the sense of the Christian God has disappeared from his authoritative position in the suprasensory world, then this authoritative place itself is still always preserved, even though as that which has become empty… What is more, the empty place demands to be occupied anew and to have the God now vanished from it replaced by (durch ersetzen) something else.

The operative phrase in Heidegger’s replacement theory is that “the empty place demands to be occupied anew,” and this provides a privileged insight into Heidegger’s vehemence for this cause. It never becomes redundant to bear in mind that Heidegger writes as a philosopher, and so when he sets forth an agenda to find the proper replacement for the God of happy memory he is hedging his venture from a philosophical vantage point. To put this in another way, Heidegger is trying to fend off what would be typical philosophical reactions to the suggestion that since God is dead a replacement must be found. Asserting that the empty place demands to be occupied “anew” means that any tired philosophical understanding of God will not do. In fact, if the only replacement for
God is one that merely reinstitutes the God of the philosophers, then it would be better to just maintain the void left by God. Heidegger explains:

"Thought metaphysically, the place that is peculiar to God is the place of the causative bringing about and preserving of whatever is, as something created. That place of God can remain empty." 92

What is noticeable here is a further articulation of Heidegger’s theological sensitivity vis-à-vis the nature of God alluded to earlier. There Heidegger’s firm stance was articulated against any misguided Nietzschean interpretations of God’s death. Humanity does not step into the empty place left by God, “because the essence of man never reaches the essential realm belonging to God.” Now as Heidegger cautions against any facile philosophical solutions to fill the empty space left by God, the same theological sensitivity is palpable. The deceased God cannot be replaced by a clone of the God who in the past performed all the vicarious functions necessary to shore up the foundations provided by the suprasensory world. This is the God of metaphysics who remained an abiding concern for Heidegger in various places of his later writings. These typically fell under the rubric of onto-theology discussed in chapter one as a further defect in metaphysics’ ability to fully appreciate and convey the meaning of Being. In any event, the metaphysically motivated understanding of God is eager to depict one of Her more important aspects as the ground of all other beings. God is here shown to be the ultimate cause and thus the self-cause — *causa sui*. While this may be acceptable in some metaphysically driven philosophical quarters its theological ramifications are deplorable, as Heidegger makes clear:

*causa sui*. This is the right name for the god of philosophy. Man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this God. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before this God. 93
Searching for an apt replacement for God in the wake of Nietzsche’s report of Her death is shaping up to be an arduous task on at least two fronts. First, it is an absurdity to recommend humankind as God’s replacement, and second it is untenable to drudge up a defunct God of philosophy as a substitute. Nietzsche thus performs a valuable service for theology when coming at him from a Heideggerian interpretation. God’s death which immediately translates into an empty space that must be filled begs for a replacement that is theologically suitable. Thus, theology is made to pause and ponder how it would best articulate a meaningful notion of God in the early 21st century. Tracy Colony indicates how Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche results ultimately in a positive theological moment of truth and discernment:

This common affirmation around which the strife of Heidegger’s conflict with Nietzsche turned can be seen to be an awareness that the emptiness opened in the wake of the departed God was a sense of nihility which held within it the possibility for re-encountering the divine.94

To stare down the empty space left by God means that theology is forced to articulate a replacement that is respectful of that essential realm that can only be inhabited by “a godly God” — not humanity and not the God of metaphysics. And it is Heidegger’s strong belief that a positive re-encounter with God will come from this period as theology feels its way through the godless nothingness and strives to think about and express a fitting replacement. During the time of uncertainty, re-evaluation and soul searching, theology can be assured that a genuine re-encounter with God is being realized more and more so long as it stays the course and refuses to fall back on the tired support offered by metaphysics:

The god-less thinking which must abandon the god of philosophy, god as causa sui, is thus perhaps closer to the divine [godly] God (göttlichen Gott). Here this means only: god-less thinking is more open to Him than onto-theo-logic would like to admit.95
The willingness to entertain the speculations resulting from God’s absence is indicative of progress toward genuine re-encounter, whereas choosing to fall back on well-known formulations to quickly and painlessly fill the void will only compromise any true progress.

Many commentators on Nietzsche’s musings over God’s death have concurred with Heidegger’s interpretation. Instead of Nietzsche promulgating an irreligious atheism in the sense that an irreversible void is left by God’s demise and absence, he signals the possibility for a re-evaluation of how God is to be understood and encountered. For some this has been expressed as a welcome opportunity for deconstruction. David Allison, for instance, elaborates on the nature of deconstruction called for by Nietzsche’s death of God fixation. It is a comprehensive program where nothing is excluded from revision and re-evaluation. Nonetheless in keeping with the estimation of Heidegger, any such re-evaluative exercise that specifically touches upon religion promises to be an opportunity for building up rather than destruction. Allison recommends that Nietzsche should be viewed as summoning humanity to a task that:

would amount to a critical deconstruction of our tradition: it would consist in a critique of those historically derived notions of causality, unity, identity, divisible time, rationality, logic, truth, soul, and God… We must also remember that this kind of critical “destruction,” or “deconstruction,” is not merely negative: its results are positive, that is, it rids us of two millennia of withered pieties, of sanctimonious shrouds.96

If Allison’s description of the positive theological potential lurking behind Nietzsche’s concerns for God’s death comes across a bit strong, another commentator, alluded to earlier, expresses the matter in such a way that the theological prospects cannot be missed. Instead of using highly charged phrases to characterize the deconstruction project that “rids us of… withered pieties… sanctimonious shrouds,” Colony upholds the
Heideggerian read of Nietzsche in a more theologically sensitive manner: “Beyond the atheistic interpretation of Nietzsche’s experience of the death of God, the thought of a deeper sense of the divine constitutes the proper context in which to interpret the proximity that Heidegger uncovered in Nietzsche’s accounts…” This helps to balance out theology’s re-evaluative experience. In the wake of God’s death, theology is faced with a crisis presented by the void of Her absence. To put forth a replacement first requires some very serious consideration of how God has been presented and how She should be better presented today. While this deconstruction may yield an awareness that some past articulations of God should be modified or even abandoned, its more important outcome is that a deeper grasp of who God is today issues forth from this re-evaluative encounter. Writing from a theological perspective, Grace Jantzen is able to articulate an evaluation of Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche that integrates the best of Allison’s and Colony’s philosophical observations. God’s death and absence offer theology an opportunity of challenge and hope — a deconstructive moment where both a hermeneutics of suspicion and a hermeneutics of generosity work in tandem.

Commenting on the feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray’s reflections on Heidegger’s concern for God’s/the gods’ absence, Jantzen writes:

But which god is absent? Is it the “good old God” who could change the weather, intervene on the side of his favorites in battle, and watch while those who called themselves his (Christian) children slaughtered Jews, Muslims, and one another? Is it the “god called God,” the godfather in whose name continents were appropriated, people enslaved, women oppressed, lesbians and gay men harassed, while incense and candles and boy-choirs chanting psalms deflected attention from the atrocities? If so, then we should hope that this god will stay away for a long time; and we should do all we can to prevent his return. That includes rethinking religion, which has a way of turning up in unexpected disguises… Therefore when Irigaray, pondering Heidegger, sees this time of the absence of god… her comments should not be read as nostalgia and not retreat to nostalgia for old time religion. Rather, her summons is to re-think religion, reconceive divinity.
The charge to re-think and reconceive God is the end result of Heidegger’s extensive musings over Nietzsche’s considerations of God’s death in *The Gay Science*. Far from it being a call of destruction that signals the end to any further theological pursuits, Nietzsche’s announcement that God is dead becomes an important catalyst for theological discourse. The empty space left by God’s absence forces theology to take stock and articulate the qualities of a truly divine God, who is able to credibly encounter early 21st century humanity. The concern then becomes one of determining how the re-thinking and reconceiving of God takes place. A very preliminary sketch was just provided by Jantzen as she cautioned in passing against nostalgia for the old God as an important component in the project of re-thinking and reconceptualization. In greater detail below, it will be shown that nostalgia is ineffectual for such a project and so what is truly called for is poetic remembrance. It is important first, however, to render a fuller exposition of how this critical re-thinking is to take place by expanding on Heidegger’s analysis of Nietzsche. For this it is necessary to return to the *dramatis personae* employed by Nietzsche to announce God’s death who were the original source of inspiration for Heidegger’s reflections. Once the how aspect necessary to properly re-think God is established and the relevance this has to the work of the venturesome poet discussed earlier in this chapter, it will be possible to bring this endeavor to a close.

By re-visiting the market place characters and their varied interests and reactions to the news of God’s death, it will become clear that searching for God is directly related to the task of re-thinking God. The lead role of course goes to the madman who clamors into the market place with the dual purpose to seek God through honest inquiry and to announce that God is dead. Supporting his performance are those Nietzsche dubs as the
bystanders, who while caught up in the usual commerce of the market place are
harangued by the madman’s questions and proclamations concerning God. Heidegger
interprets these Nietzschean characters in such a way that their differing attitudes become
object lessons of how to think and how not to think as well as how to re-think and not to
re-think.

Proper thinking and re-thinking necessary for the reconceptualization of God are
directly related to the commitment and desire one has to search for God. On the one hand,
there is the madman whose vociferous search Heidegger warns should not go unnoticed;
“it can be enough for us simply to ponder for once what the madman says about the death
of God and how he says it… the madman ‘cries incessantly: I seek God! I seek God!’”99
On the other hand are the bystanders who express their complete lack of interest in the
madman’s search by derision and snide remarks, so depicted by Nietzsche: “Has he
[God] got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he
hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? Emigrated? — Thus they yelled and
laughed”100 For Heidegger, these hecklers are unable to take the madman’s search for
God seriously because they are unwilling and unable to engage in genuine thinking.
They, according to Heidegger, “are no longer able to seek God. They can no longer seek
because they no longer think. Those standing about in the market place have abolished
thinking and replaced it with idle babble.”101

The madman is held up as worthy of emulation. He takes seriously God’s death and
absence as a call to embark on a search for God that is driven by authentic thinking. And
it is only this kind of thinking that can in turn spawn the theological re-thinking necessary
to reconceptualize the absent God. Far from being a raging lunatic heralding a new age of
supercilious atheism, the madman of Nietzsche’s market place scene represents a committed yearning for God whose radical thinking is reminiscent of a prayerful plea for God in the likeness of Psalm 130. Heidegger ponders, “Has a thinking man [the madman] perhaps here really cried out *de profundis*?”¹⁰² When introducing the figure of the madman earlier, a conscious effort was made to expose Nietzsche’s particular understanding of the madman’s affliction. His madness was described by Nietzsche as *Irsinn*, “the eruption of arbitrariness in feeling, seeing, and hearing, the enjoyment of the mind’s lack of discipline, the joy in human unreason.”¹⁰³

This definition has a tremendous bearing in coming to terms with the radical nature of the madman’s thinking. Influenced as it is by madness as *Irsinn*, the madman’s thinking does not always stay within the boundaries of typical thinking. Therefore Heidegger’s assessments of Nietzsche’s madman are most accurate when he connects the madman’s thinking with an impassioned searching. If God is dead, the void of Her absence can only be filled by re-thinking who God truly is. This type of thinking is marked by a willingness to go beyond the usual parameters imposed upon thinking in order to search for God on uncharted paths with a variety of possible articulations. This thinking could lead to a prayerful expression, as noted by Heidegger in the madman’s *de profundis* lament for the absent God. Whatever precise form the articulation may take, it is clear that any thinking that supports searching for God and remaining open in turn to Her reconceptualization will be characterized as beyond the pure dictates of reason. This is not a plea for mindless irrational thought in the search for God, but rather an invitation to be open to the reality that God’s implacable absence — so expressed by Her death — will challenge thinking beyond its usual limits as it struggles to meaningfully articulate a
replacement and so reestablish God’s presence. This is Heidegger’s reaction to the madman’s thinking that gave way to a pious search for God. Humanity will not be able to join the madman in his thinking search that is expressed as an incessant cry — “I seek God! I seek God!” — until it willingly embraces new ways of thinking: “Thinking begins only when we have come to know that reason, glorified for centuries, is the most stiff-necked adversary of thought.”¹⁰⁴

Any time the matter of thinking arises in the grand Heideggerian schema, it is important to bear in mind that Being is immediately implicated. As a result, the theological excitement generated by the possibility of a new thinking that can effectively confront the assertion of God’s death must be properly channeled. Without such direction, there is the possibility of reckless theological application that ignores the integrity of Heidegger’s overall project. To avoid any mis-application at present, it can be recalled that the important relationship between Being and thinking was addressed in chapter one. Though it would be impossible to review all the fine points presented there, it is important now to recall Heidegger’s insistence that the true merit of any thinking comes from the extent to which it thinks Being in response to Being’s call. Therefore it is fully acceptable for thinking to be led beyond the pale of reason so long as this movement was initiated by Being’s prompting and in turn leads to a deeper understanding of Being. Two remarks from Heidegger cited in chapter one will provide the necessary foundation to develop the current interest in modes of thinking consonant with the madman’s thinking, which ultimately drives his search for the absent, dead God. Heidegger writes:
[t]hat Being itself, and the manner in which Being itself, strikes a man’s thinking, that rouses his thinking and stirs it to rise from Being itself to respond and correspond to Being as such.105

[T]hinking is not a means to gain knowledge. Thinking cuts furrows into the soil of Being.106

Remaining on this general level of the relationship between Being and thinking, an additional critique fully developed in chapter one and mentioned in the introductory section of this chapter is also worthy of recollection. According to Heidegger, Western philosophy has not been successful throughout its long history at cultivating a thinking that was consistently attuned to Being’s call or appeal. Heidegger describes this phenomenon as the “forgetfulness of Being” (Seinsvergessenheit):

Nowhere are we confronted by a thinking that thinks the truth of Being… The history of Being begins, and indeed necessarily, with the forgetting of Being… Being is not coming into the light of its own essence. In the appearing of whatever is as such, Being itself remains wanting. The truth of Being falls from memory. It remains forgotten.107

While it is not feasible to re-examine the details of Heidegger’s “forgetfulness of Being” brought forth in chapter one, it is fitting now to appreciate the dynamic of forgetting/remembering that is involved in the thinking of Being. Before attempting any theological probe that resonates with the searching thinking of Nietzsche’s madman, a firm footing must be established on two broad Heideggerian foundations. First, any novel thinking that transcends the boundaries of reason will have an affinity with the thinking of the madman’s search for God as long as it remains devoted to Being. Second, as thinking within the formal confines of philosophy has failed to maintain this devotion and has been plagued by an enduring “forgetfulness of Being,” any new thinking will in some way break out of this amnesia by embracing a newly cultivated sense of remembering.
Maintaining a devotion to Being will not prove to be too difficult or unfamiliar. It has been a constant emphasis throughout this work that Being must remain at the forefront of any Heideggerian investigation. Those theologically motivated investigations find ultimate guidance and hope by adhering to Heidegger’s very familiar schema which unequivocally establishes Being’s importance:

Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy is the divinity to be thought. Only in the light of the essence of divinity can it be thought or said what the word “God” is to signify.\textsuperscript{108}

At the same time, it will not be anything exceedingly difficult or new to explore forms of thinking beyond reason which involve remembering. A connection was made as early as chapter one between thinking and memory, where Heidegger’s philological exercises gave way to an appreciation of the deep expression of piety that is possible when someone thinks commemoratively from the heart. But more recently in this chapter the essential law of poetic activity was shown to be inextricably linked to remembering. The poet lives her vocation to the fullest when she thinks with one accord what has been and what is coming. This temporal aplomb requires a thinking that is an innovative expression of remembrance, since it is not only limited to recalling the past but effectuates a harmony among all three temporal modalities — past, present and future. In his interpretation of Hölderlin, Heidegger expressed this temporal feat accomplished by remembrance as follows: “we experience what-has-been, returning in the \textit{remembrance}, swinging out beyond our present, and coming to us as something futural. All at once this remembrance must think of what has been, as something which is not yet unfolded.”\textsuperscript{109}

This temporal adroitness of the poet was then placed in the relief of yet another Hölderlinian concern of great interest to Heidegger — the needy time of the gods who
have fled and the gods who are yet to arrive. Integrating these two poetic concerns leads to the following question: Can the remembrance of the poet effectively address the present challenge of godlessness, since the gods of the past are gone and the gods of the future have yet to come? This in turn has direct bearing on the novel expressions of remembering that will take thinking beyond reason and be able to direct the madman’s search for the dead God. With this important connection made between the first and second parts of the chapter, this project finds itself in a favorable position to formulate a conclusion. In the remaining pages, an existential-phenomenological examination of remembering will ensue in order to show the theological resolution to the crisis of godlessness which preoccupies Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin and Nietzsche. This will involve a final theological application of Heidegger’s thinking. As with past attempts at application, all due caution and care will be exercised in order to achieve a mutual respect for the work of Heidegger and the discipline of theology. In the end it will be clear that remembering as conceived by Heidegger is the thinking which effectively accompanies the search for an absent Deity, whether expressed as Hölderlin’s fled gods or gods yet to come or as Nietzsche’s dead God. In its ultimate expression, according to Heidegger, remembering becomes a greeting of the holy.

Remembering-Thinking: A Thankful Gesture that Receives the Greeting of the Holy

In order to fully comprehend Heidegger’s definitive articulation of remembering as a greeting of the holy, it will be necessary to appreciate the steps of development that lead to this conceptualization. The first stage that must be acknowledged is the close connection that Heidegger makes between thinking and remembering. At a preliminary
level, Heidegger is able to lay the groundwork for this connection by recourse to one of his familiar and beloved tacks — etymology. J. Glenn Gray, who translated several of Heidegger’s later works, explains how German more than English lends itself to Heidegger’s connection. Gray writes:

The German word for memory is Gedächtnis which is derivative of the verb denken, to think; nearly all the associated words such as andenken, to commemorate or memorialize, keep to the intimate kinship of thinking and remembering, as we do not in English.\textsuperscript{110}

Beyond the etymological linkage, Heidegger further establishes the close relationship between thinking and remembering based on their mutual capacity for “gathering” (die Versammlung). American Continental philosopher Edward Casey, who writes extensively on the phenomenological approach to remembering, sees the function of gathering as the more substantive basis for Heidegger’s close association of thinking with remembering. He explains:

No one has recognized this fecund filiation between thinking and remembering more profoundly than Heidegger, who states categorically (at the beginning of What is Called Thinking?) that “memory is the gathering of thought”...[Heidegger writes:] “When we, in thinking, are gathered and concentrated on the most thought-provoking, then we dwell where all recalling thought is gathered. The gathering of thinking back into what must be thought is what we call the memory.”\textsuperscript{111}

The constraint of space heads off any temptation to fully explore the nature of gathering and to point out the many ways it is used by Heidegger.\textsuperscript{112} Nonetheless, it is sufficient for the purpose at hand to appreciate that the connection made between thinking and remembering on the basis of gathering enables forward movement along the stages of Heidegger’s development from remembering to greeting. Gray offers a succinct explanation of gathering that well serves this current aim:

Throughout his long life Heidegger’s central concern was to discover what thinking is and how to accomplish it. Though there are many kinds of thinking, to be sure, the kind he came to recognize as
appropriate to his purposes is a recollective or “gathered” kind, in German *ein andenkendes Denken*. Simply stated, recollective thinking involves a concentrating of our minds upon a subject matter in such a way that we belong wholly to the matter of thought.\textsuperscript{113}

Depicting Heidegger’s gathering that takes place in thinking-remembering as an effective means to achieve undistracted concentration and focus is a point of invaluable worth and will be revisited at key points in the ensuing argument. However, the way in which Gray sees this effort of concentration and focus as taking place in the mind will have to be qualified and greatly expanded in order for Heidegger’s thought on remembering to realize its fullest potential for theological application as a greeting for the holy.

On the one hand, being aware that the remembering-thinking which Heidegger envisions is best characterized as a gathering builds upon and enhances the remembrance of the poet. According to Heidegger’s interpretation of Hölderlin addressed earlier in the chapter, the remembering poet consummates her poetic vocation by thinking with one accord what has been and what is coming. She actualizes this during the present needy time of fled gods and anticipated gods, and so by extension it is a remembering-thinking with one accord about the past gods who have been and the future gods who are coming. As it was firmly advanced above, this poetic remembrance is indicative of an extraordinary temporal accomplishment — the harmonization of past, present and future. And in light of the most recent discussion, it could be stated with ease that this thinking with one accord, this harmonization of past, present and future is a gathering.

However, to thoroughly appreciate the advance ushered in by Heidegger’s remembering as connected to thinking as gathering, there needs to be a realization that something more is at stake than striking a balance among the three temporal modes. In order to truly dwell in the needy time of the past gods who have left and the future gods
who are still to arrive, it is not enough that remembrance acknowledges the temporal aspects involved and deftly affects their reconciliation. That is why it is important here to bear in mind that Hölderlin’s remembering poet, who operates during this needy time of godlessness, is complemented by Nietzsche’s market place madman, who desperately seeks after the God who is dead. It then becomes clear that Heidegger’s remembering-thinking as a gathering transcends any temporal harmonization and comes to be appreciated as possessing the powers to directly confront the matter of godlessness with commitment and resolve. This gathered remembering-thinking thus goes beyond reason and any tidy abstraction such as those related to attaining temporal equilibrium among past, present and future. Heidegger’s desire to push remembering beyond the temporal provides strong evidence that he is promoting a more phenomenological understanding of memory. A clear echo of Heidegger’s efforts sounds in the more recent scholarship of Casey, whose work was mentioned earlier. By submitting remembering to a rigorous phenomenological investigation, Casey is able to unshackle memory from its more customary interpretations. Thus he and Heidegger are in alignment when they suggest that remembering’s deeper capacities are realized when it goes beyond operating exclusively within and for the temporal. Casey offers this challenge: “But we may say more radically that memory involves something more than the purely temporal in its own makeup.”

That there is “something more” than the temporal in Heidegger’s estimation of remembering can be seen in those reflections on Hölderlin’s poem “Remembrance” in which he forges a relationship between remembering and greeting (das Grüßen). In some of these passages Heidegger is very clear and direct that remembering and greeting
should be recognized as interchangeable. At one point he observes that “Remembrance is a kind of greeting,” and a few paragraphs later he states, “Greeting is a re-thinking (An-denken).” But beyond these equation-like formulations, the real character of Heidegger’s intent to devise an expanded notion of remembering beyond the temporal comes through in those places where greeting and its varied interactions with remembering are given greater elaboration. For instance, a digression proves telling as Heidegger closely examines a line where Hölderlin explicitly exhorts the gesture of greeting. In the first stanza of “Remembrance” Hölderlin writes, “But go now and greet/The beautiful Garrone,/And the gardens of Bordeaux.” At one point in his ensuing reflection, Heidegger alludes to the relevance of a line from another work by Hölderlin titled “The Wanderer.” In this elegy Heidegger makes special note of the fact that a traveler greets, in a remembering-thinking way, a gristmill and courtyard that he encounters on his journey:

The mill and the courtyard are thought of. The daily work and the dwelling-place of the country man are greeted...The mill greeted in the foreign land still continues to be a reminder of the homeland.

It is worth noting how the traveler’s gesture of greeting invokes a remembering-thinking that goes beyond temporal concerns and brings about a deeper sense of experiential attunement. No doubt that when the tourist greets the gristmill and courtyard he sees on his trip he is “reminded” of past encounters with these places at home. Likewise, future encounters are anticipated upon his return home. However, the greeting experience is not confined to a past memory or a future expectation. Instead, greeting in this instance invokes reminding which is a very specialized type of remembering-thinking. Even though, according to Casey, “reminders themselves constitute a subset of remembering,” they still engender that gathered sense of remembering-thinking which
brings about a sense of experiential attunement with a degree of focus and level of concentration that is still difficult to match. Despite the fact that reminding is not exactly the same as remembering, it nonetheless possesses all the force of gathering — even beyond the gathering of the temporal modes — when allied with the gesture of greeting. Casey observes:

> In this way reminding … draws things together. It is a force of unusual unifying power … Reminding brings together and unifies the *disjunct membri* of human experience: past, present, and future, duty and desire, the forgotten and the remembered. \(^{118}\)

Heidegger’s final thoughts on the implications of the traveler’s greeting the gristmill and the courtyard are similar to Casey’s observations. Even though Heidegger does not make the fine distinction between reminding and remembering, the tourist’s gesture of greeting nevertheless becomes an experience of heightened integrative awareness. Following is Heidegger’s description of the force of remembering as occasioned by greeting:

> Even the most inconspicuous word and every “image” which seems to be formed only as a “poetical” embellishment, is a greeting word. It speaks *in commemoration* (*Andenkend*) and thinks back on the foreign which has been, and on the homeland which is coming, in their original belonging-together. \(^{119}\)

It should now be clear that Heidegger’s incorporation of the gesture of greeting into any instance of remembering-thinking succeeds in stretching the capabilities of memory beyond any exclusive functioning in temporal affairs. It cannot be denied that greeting includes the well-established gathering function of remembering-thinking and will always include the possibility of a focused harmonization of past, present and future. However, there are other possibilities for focused concentration that will touch human experience at levels beyond the abstract and cerebral where the temporal accord is mainly achieved. And it is these possibilities that are of greater theological interest.
Acknowledging and confronting Hölderlin’s needy time of godlessness with a searching zeal that is on par with Nietzsche’s madman requires an experiential engagement that no doubt includes the cognitive but must also claim the entire person. To finally arrive at Heidegger’s belief that greeting is the main organ of communication used by the holy, it is necessary to first comprehend that any remembering-thinking associated with such greeting is an expression of the entire person. It can be recalled from discussions earlier in the chapter that Heidegger assigns a distinctive role to the holy vis-à-vis the gods or God. The holy acts as a regulatory medium through which access to the gods/God is controlled. Despite the many sound theological critiques that could be leveled at this aspect of Heidegger’s thinking, it is necessary for this project to attempt careful theological applications. As a result, if the holy and God are intimately linked in the later Heidegger, then the greeting of the holy during this time of godlessness must be welcomed and received with the concentrated experiential awareness and attunement that comes only with a greeting which expresses a remembering-thinking of the entire person.

In order to establish the possibility of a fitting greeting to receive the greeting of the holy, the entire preceding argument was devoted to making a case for a remembering-thinking associated with such a greeting that goes beyond temporal concerns. The most important outcome of this argument was that the expanded remembering-thinking would in turn be appreciated as impacting human experience in its entirety — mind and body. It becomes of utmost importance at this final stage in the current effort to appreciate that the later Heidegger’s remembering-thinking is not by default beyond mental experience because it is expressive first and foremost of something beyond temporality. Instead, there is a more immediate link that has tremendous bearing on the nature of the greeting
that will be best suited to receive the greeting of the holy and thus allow for a much needed greeting of the gods/God in this godless time. Casey is able to express well the implications that result from fostering deeper notions of remembering-thinking: “If remembering were a sheerly temporal phenomenon — and even allowing for a more capacious, less linear notion of time — it would remain disembodied.”\textsuperscript{120}

For Heidegger remembering-thinking is never disembodied. With all due respect for J. Glenn Gray and the contribution he made by translating several of Heidegger’s later writings, issue must now be taken with a portion of his insight discussed earlier. Gray was cited above for the clarity he offered in explaining the close tie that exists between thinking and remembering in Heidegger’s thought. After the valuable insight to pay attention to the original German for its ability to reveal the connection between thinking (\textit{denken}) and remembering (\textit{andenken}), Gray suggests that thinking as “gathered” best expresses the deep affinity that Heidegger envisions between thinking and remembering. Gray wrote: “a recollective [‘gathered’ kind] of thinking [\textit{ein andenkendes Denken}] involves a concentrating of our minds upon a subject matter in such a way that we belong wholly to the matter of thought.”\textsuperscript{121} The gathering that takes place in Heidegger’s remembering-thinking goes beyond the ability to concentrate human experience at a cognitive level alone. In the time of divine elusiveness and even divine absence, it is a remembering-thinking that is fully embodied as a greeting that will be most hospitable to the greeting of the holy. Such a hospitable exchange of greetings will lessen the effects of anxiety associated with godlessness and moreover will successfully conduct the search for the fled gods/dead God.
Careful attention to the unmistakable embodied nature of Heidegger’s estimation of remembering-thinking will leave no doubt of its devotional qualities — qualities best suited for a greeting that will greet the greeting of the holy with a reverential hospitality. During the 1951-52 winter semester and the 1952 summer semester Heidegger taught a series of courses devoted to the question of Being in dialogue with pre-Socratic philosophy and Nietzsche’s metaphysics of the will. These lectures have been brought together in the published work titled *What is Called Thinking?* In the second part of this course series Heidegger asks the question, What is thinking?, and recommends that one must be aware that there are really four questions in play when attempting to formulate any sort of response:

The ambiguousness of the question, “What is called thinking?” conceals several possible ways of dealing with it. Getting ahead of ourselves, we may stress four ways in which the question can be posed.\(^\text{122}\)

For the present purposes, only the third manner of asking the question and its related response will be pursued. With clarity and expediency this will show that the greeting associated with the remembering-thinking necessary to adequately greet the greeting of the holy in this godless time of search and yearning is indeed a fully embodied greeting. In addition, it will show how this remembering-thinking is beyond reason, or what Heidegger calls “representational” thought, which was the first requirement called for to address the current state of divine elusiveness. The crux of Heidegger’s third way of attempting to arrive at an understanding of genuine thinking is basically a plea for qualifications that any true thinker must possess. In drafting such a résumé Heidegger suggests the following guidelines:

“What is called thinking?” says further, in the third place: what are the prerequisites we need so that we may be able to think with essential
rightness? What is called for on our part in order that we may each time achieve good thinking?123

In order to formulate the ultimate attribute of the authentic thinker, Heidegger makes use of an expression from the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides — “One should both say and think that Being is” (chre to legein te noein t’ eon emm enai.). In typical Heideggerian style, this phrase receives an extensive yet purposeful reworking. While issue could be taken with Heidegger’s re-translation of Parmenides’ saying, sympathy for any license is easily cultivated when his overall intent is considered. As always, Heidegger in the broadest sense is attempting to advance the question of the meaning of Being. With the help of Parmenides, he is given an opportunity for such advancement with regard to thinking. And so it is the aim of achieving a philosophically enriched approach to thinking that motivates his re-translation project:

Now we must translate Parmenides’ saying… we shall attempt the translation along the way of the one question: “What calls on us to think?”124

Without getting into the finer points of the translation, it is important at present to at least pay attention to Heidegger’s choice to focus on two words. These become for him the key to addressing the third question concerning thinking which strives to identify the indispensable characteristic of a true thinker. Parmenides’ admonition that “One should both say and think that Being is” will realize its greatest potential and expose the depths of thinking only if there is a careful and creative translation of the Greek verbs to say (legein) and to think (noein). Heidegger does not question the accuracy of any previous translation; he instead offers a challenge to ask what the words as typically translated really mean. In this way the meaning more in keeping with Parmenides’ intent will be
captured and most importantly the meaning for thinking as conveyed by their interactive
dynamic will break through. Heidegger explains:

The Greek verbs *legein* and *noein*, according to the dictionary, are here
translated correctly. The dictionary informs us that *legein* means to
state, and *noein* to think. But what does “stating” mean? What does
“thinking” mean?125

For Heidegger the translation that allows for the true meaning of *legein* to come
forth is one that stretches the connotations of “to say” and “to state” to a point where “to
lay before”, “to lay out” and “to lay to” are included: “the Greeks understand stating in
the light of laying out, laying before, laying to, and for this reason call that ‘laying’
*legein’.”126 On the other hand, Heidegger believes that the true meaning of *noein* is
attained by a translation that pushes the connotative boundaries of “to think” so that it is
better rendered as “to perceive.” “We shall proceed more cautiously, translating *noein*
with ‘perceive,’ rather than say ‘thinking’…”127 And it is the outcome of Heidegger’s
development of the richness of “to perceive” that will have a lasting impact on coming to
terms with the embodied nature of the greeting which accompanies the remembering-
thinking and worthily greets the greeting of the holy. Heidegger exposes the depth of to
perceive as follows:

In *noein*, what is perceived concerns us in such a way that we take it up
specifically, and do something with it. But where do we take what is to
be perceived? How do we take it up? We take it to heart… *Noein* is
taking something to heart.128

Heidegger’s translation of *noein* as taking something to heart would seem to be
the final word in any attempt to establish the embodied nature of remembering-thinking
and its related gesture of greeting. Indeed, this translation will prove to be indispensable
in the effort to move remembering-thinking as envisioned by Heidegger beyond a
gathering or concentrating operation of the mind. But in the rush to firmly establish the
extent to which a fully embodied remembering-thinking greets the greeting of the holy, there are other valuable aspects to this embodied comportment that could be easily overlooked. That is why it is important to keep in mind the integrity of Heidegger’s translation project. In order to discover the qualifications that any true thinker should possess, there are two words in Parmenides’ expression that must be plumbed for all of their potential meaning — legein and noein. Thus, one cannot rest content with the promising bodily connotations that arise from a translation of noein that yields “taking something to heart.” Instead legein and the connotative expansions made by Heidegger’s translation must be appreciated in tandem with noein in order to arrive at the fullest understanding of the character traits which belong to the serious thinker. Heidegger provides the following gentle reminder of the necessity to preserve the dynamic relationship that obtains between legein and noein in order to respond adequately to his third out of four possible ways to probe the meaning of thinking:

The third way is intent on arriving at what is needed, and thus required of us, if we are ever to accomplish thinking in an essentially fitting manner. No one knows what is called “thinking” in the sense of the third question until he is capable of legein te noein te.  

To be counted as a genuine thinker, therefore, one’s attributes must include the dual capacity to let something lie before her and to take something to heart. Only by respecting Heidegger’s belief that these two interrelated traits must be possessed by anyone who wants to “accomplish thinking in an essentially fitting manner” can there be a prudent extension of his thinking. Most specifically, the theological application now being advanced concerning the embodiment of the remembering-thinking greeting that greets the holy can now be fully exposed on a firmer footing. In other words, in trying to make theological connections with Heidegger’s assertions that the holy is greeted by a
remembering-thinking embodied in the gesture of greeting, it is not enough that this bodily experience has been interpreted as “taking something to heart.” To arrive at the full embodied comportment of the greeting that greets the holy, it cannot merely be a matter of glomming on to a part of human anatomy. While this certainly takes the remembering-thinking which engenders the greeting gesture beyond the mind, it does so by resorting to an equally delimiting physicalism. Thus, there is a need to fall back on the way Heidegger achieves the full embodied comportment that accompanies genuine thinking at the most general level — by allowing the thinker to exercise her double capacity for legein (letting things lie before her) and noein (taking things to heart).

The full bodily comportment of thinking overall is conveyed by the interaction of legein and noein when the total effect of Heidegger’s translating project is understood. Not only does he offer some novel ways to interpret legein and noein as they appear in Parmenides’ saying about Being, but he also believes that the very relationship between these words is most telling. Robert Mugerauer agrees that more can be learned from Heidegger’s translation project about thinking if one steers away from an isolated focus on the individual words and realizes that their real force comes through in their interaction. Mugerauer illustrates the scope of Heidegger’s project:

In short, Heidegger translates legein as letting-lie-before us and noein as taking-to-heart. He goes on to explain four essential aspects of his ongoing translation... In the fourth place... we see that legein determines noein. This means both that “noein unfolds out of legein” (that is, taking to heart is not any kind of grasping what lies before us, but is in the manner of letting come what lies before us) and “noein is kept within legein” (that is, the heart, into which things are taken, itself belongs within the gathering where that which lies before us is kept safely).130

Even though Mugerauer’s analysis remains at a general level, the succinct way that he is able to portray Heidegger’s contention that real thinking requires not only a
body but a fully embodied comportment has tremendous bearing on the theological implications of the gesture of greeting. It was well established that, for Heidegger, thinking is on equal footing with remembering. Furthermore, it was shown that this remembering-thinking is akin to greeting. If everything that Mugerauer has unearthed concerning Heidegger’s belief that remembering-thinking in general requires a fully engaged bodily comportment, then the same requirement pertains to the gesture of greeting. And it is this type of greeting that offers the greatest theological potential, since, as will be shown below in greater detail, this greeting is the optimal gesture to receive the greeting of the holy in this difficult (needy) time of a Nietzschean God seeking against a Hölderlinian back-drop of godlessness.

Though Mugerauer’s presentation of Heidegger’s description of the relationship between *legein* ("letting-lie-before-us") and *noien* ("taking-to-heart") makes no attempt to extend the general traits of thinking to a remembering-thinking greeting that greets the holy, the analysis nonetheless does lead to a better understanding of an extension of similar concern that Heidegger makes himself. In other terms, what Mugerauer is able to identify without getting lost in the density of Heidegger’s translation exercise is the fact that real thinking (at its most general level) requires a tandem ability on the part of the thinker to let something lie before her and to take something to heart. What this in essence becomes on further inspection is a modification of the bodily aspect of thinking. *Noein*, as taking something to heart, is modified by its interaction with *legein*, since "*Noein unfolds out of legein* and "*noein is kept within legein." Removing the Heideggerian jargon from these modifications allows for an appreciation of the fully engaged bodily comportment that accompanies thinking. Moreover, the very nature of
this comportment as a gesture of hospitable receptivity that embraces without grasping and keeps safe without confining makes Heidegger’s further expansion on noein fully understandable and most suitable for the current theological attempt at a further extension of Heidegger’s notion of greeting.

After stating that the trait of noein in genuine thinking means taking something to heart, Heidegger goes on to connect this to memory, which is none too surprising since it has been well established that thinking and remembering enjoy a kindred relationship for him. However, the connection to memory does have a surprising and fortuitous twist when he further links it by way of etymology to the Old English noun “thanc” which is redolent with imagery of prayer and devotion. Heidegger explains:

Noein is taking something to heart. The noun to the verb noein, which is noos, nous, originally means almost exactly what we have explained earlier as the basic meaning of thanc, devotion, memory.131

Thanc has already been discussed in a very passing way in chapter one, but now it deserves a closer look because of its ability in Heidegger’s estimation to provide the ultimate basis for appreciating the devotional quality behind any genuine effort of remembering-thinking. This in turn allows for a smooth and well-grounded theological extension. Since remembering-thinking is synonymous with greeting for Heidegger, then the greeting that most suitably greets the greeting of the holy is a fully embodied gesture that comports the necessary reverence — it takes the greeting of the holy to heart and keeps it safe but never in a manipulative or “grasping” way. In other words, the greeting that greets the holy’s greeting is a receptive embrace that allows the holy to be the holy.

Thanc has the ability to achieve such lofty ends, because in its deep and long-standing etymological relationship with remembering-thinking the notion of heartfelt gratitude becomes its definitive articulation. Heidegger traces the etymological course
which leads to this expression of thanksgiving, and in the end it becomes hard to distinguish genuine remembering-thinking from thanking:

The Old English *thence*, to think, and *thancian*, to thank are closely related; the Old English noun for thought is *thanc* or *thonc* — a thought, a grateful thought, and the expression of such a thought; today it survives in the plural *thanks*… Is thinking a giving of thanks? 132

The suggestion that thinking immediately and simultaneously implies thanking encourages strong speculation about the possible place of prayer being included in this line of reasoning. What is most astonishing, however, is that the idea of prayer or devotion as having a place here is not exclusively found in voices eager for theological interpretation. Rather, Heidegger himself establishes the connection, which in turn makes it even easier and more credible to advance the theological extension being attempted here regarding the greeting of the holy. Heidegger’s most compelling case to join thanking with prayer is made when he emphasizes thanking’s relationship to the memory aspect of the remember-thinking dynamic. He argues:

> Both memory and thanks move and have their being in the *thanc* [heart]. “Memory” initially did not at all mean the power to recall… Originally, “memory” means as much devotion: a constant concentrated abiding with something…133

While this lends firm support to the argument that Heidegger himself would endorse most attempts to connect the efforts of remembering-thinking thanking to the disposition of prayer, an even stronger endorsement from him is evident when he delineates the exact focus of this prayer and devotion. To put this in another way, it is just not to some generic "something" that this remembering-thinking thanking abides with a prayerful constancy and concentration. Instead, all efforts of this remembering-thinking thanking are focused upon the holy. With this in place, it then becomes possible to execute without hesitation the specific theological application being advanced here
concerning the greeting that greets the holy. First, however, it is necessary to allow Heidegger the opportunity to specify the focal point of any devotional remembering-thinking thanking:

In its original telling sense, memory means as much as devotion (Andacht). This word possesses the special tone of the pious and piety (des Frommen und der Frömmigkeit), and designates the devotion of prayer (des Gebetes), only because it denotes the all-comprehensive relation of concentration upon the holy and the gracious. The thank unfolds in memory, which persists as devotion.134

An enlightened recourse can now be made to Heidegger’s reflections on Hölderlin’s poem “Remembrance” which inspired this chapter’s quest to discover the thinking beyond reason that most adequately confronts the age of godlessness and searches nonetheless for the elusive Deity. More specifically and of greater relevance for the current discussion, it is here that Heidegger closely reflects upon the greeting and the holy. As he ponders over the poem’s opening line Heidegger exploits the nautical favor granted to the northeast wind:

The northeast blows,  
Of winds the dearest  
To me, because of a fiery spirit  
And a good voyage it promises to mariners.

It has already been established in an earlier section of this chapter that the sailor and the poet share much in common in Hölderlin’s works. Therefore, the northeast wind is as dear to the sailor as it is to the poet. The Hölderlinian basis for the nautical and poetic affection for this air current is explained by Del Caro:

The northeast wind is beloved by the sailors for its favorable direction,  
beloved by the poet because it comes to the aid of sailors — which is to say, it comes to his aid as well when we follow Hölderlin’s established association between sailor and poet.135

What Heidegger does is to make the most of the way that the northeast wind aids the travel of the sailor and extends it to the good effects that it also has on the work of the
poet, the sailor’s alter-ego. The next lines of the poem indicate how the northeast wind steers the course of journeying seafarers in directions that ensure optimal destinations. With sails that harness the gust of the northeasterly winds, the sailors are able to “greet” the beautiful Garrone river and the Bordeaux gardens:

But go now and greet
The beautiful Garrone,
And the gardens of Bordeaux

When extended to the poet, an equally favorable outcome results from her reception of this inspirational breeze. According to Heidegger:

The northeast wind is never just the messenger through whom the poet sends his greetings. The northeast itself is welcomed before all else, because this wind, through its blowing, makes clear for the poet the location and time of his poetic vocation… The poet, standing in the blowing of the northeast wind, is the one greeted by the greeting of the holy. That is why he must welcome this wind which exposes him to his essential vocation. That is why the poet sends his greeting through this wind to what-has-been. He thinks of what-has-been in his thinking of what-is-coming. That is the holy…

Besides the excitement that this passage engenders as Heidegger makes explicit reference to the greeting and the holy, it also provides important context and continuity for the developing argument. For instance, the mythical quality of the northeast wind was just presented as an important means to ensure that both the sailor and the poet fulfill essential goals of their respective callings — the sailor arrives safely at desired destinations in a direct and timely fashion while the poet thinks with one accord about the past and future. It will be recalled how earlier in the chapter the poet fulfilled her vocation through remembrance, a remembering-thinking that “swings-out” beyond the present to simultaneously and harmoniously think about what-has-been in the past and what-is-coming in the future. The passage offers a further point of context and continuity when it states that a gesture of greeting complements the remembering-thinking that brings about the fulfillment of the poet’s vocation. It is advantageous to put aside for a
moment the otherwise welcome allusions to the holy that arise in conjunction with the greeting. By paying attention exclusively to how the poet fully realizes her calling, it becomes obvious that the ability to bring together past and future at this moment requires not only an abstract remembering-thinking but a gesture as well. In other words, the poet at the defining point in her vocation engages in a cognitive remembering-thinking that is fully expressed in the embodied gesture of greeting. This complements the more general treatment above concerning remembering and greeting. There the main thrust of the presentation was to show Heidegger’s belief that remembrance and greeting share a very close bond and likeness. From there it was possible to appreciate remembering as operative beyond temporal matters. With remembering-greeting the human person not only marks time in an abstract sense, viz. the past as past, but experiences a heightened attuned awareness in the present that engages her entire existence.

With these loose ends concerning the poet’s vocation brought together in context and with continuity, it is now possible to return to the main interests at hand concerning the greeting and the holy. At the most basic and unspecified level, it is Heidegger’s contention that the poetic vocation is lived to the utmost when the poet engages in a remembering-thinking that is complemented by a gesture of greeting. When more specificity is given about the nature of this poetic encounter, then another element is discovered as being instrumental to the poetic calling — gratitude. When the poet greets the greeting of the holy, it goes without saying that this is an encounter driven by a remembering-thinking. But ultimately this remembering-thinking embodied in a greeting is effective only if it is accompanied by a marked level of thanking. The poet greets the greeting of the holy by virtue of her remembering-thinking, but never with a sense of
pride or smugness that she controls the nature and extent of the encounter. Instead, the poet is humbled by the holy encounter and moved to an expression of wonder and thanksgiving. Heidegger writes: “The poem shelters the astonished thanks for the wonder of being greeted by the holy…”

The way is now paved to bring the current effort of theological application to a fitting conclusion. It was determined earlier in a broad sense that remembering-thinking is related to thanking. This dynamic of remembering-thinking thanking was seen to have a devotional or prayerful objective since it permitted a concentrated focus on the holy. However, since this remembering-thinking thanking is rooted in legein and noein its focus upon the holy is best seen as a delicate embrace of the holy that is ever respectful of the holy’s initiative and prerogative — it takes the holy to heart and keeps it safe there. When this general understanding of the remembering-thinking thanking is joined with what has been presented about greeting, then the thinking beyond reason has been discovered that will most effectively confront the time of godlessness (as announced by Hölderlin) and will lead the related search for the God who has died (as proclaimed by Nietzsche). Greeting at the most basic level is a form of remembering-thinking. As an embodied gesture it takes remembering-thinking beyond abstract, temporal concerns and becomes an experience of heightened attunement in the present. When greeting is appreciated in a more specific way with regard to its relationship to the poet, then it is seen as the gesture which welcomes the greeting of the holy. Finally, whether seen in this more poetic capacity or at a very general level, greeting as the embodiment of remembering-thinking is always an expression of gratitude. The immediate implication of a thankful greeting is a gift. David Farrell Krell believes that gift becomes the focal point
for Heidegger’s remembering-thinking thanking that greets in order to take something to heart and keep it safe: “Heidegger appeals to the language of gift-giving and bestowal to describe the gathering of thinking.” Heidegger himself explains how the notion of gift is the obvious and natural basis for a remembering-thinking greeting of thanks, as he writes:

When we give thanks, we give it for something. We give thanks for something by giving thanks to him whom we have to thank for it. The things for which we owe thanks are not things we have from ourselves. They are given to us. We receive many gifts, of many kinds.

Any encounter with the holy must be viewed as a unique kind of gift. As a result, the fitting comportment for such encounters is a gesture of greeting that welcomes the overture of the holy with a deep sense of gratitude and in a remembering-thinking way takes to heart and keeps safe the effects of the experience. Encounters with the holy will remain possible in this age of godlessness, but they must always be perceived as gratuitous. For Heidegger, it is Hölderlin’s poet who faithfully lives out her calling and greets the gift of the holy greeting by a remembering-thinking that forever remains grateful. In this way the current between needy time of godlessness, expressed as the gods who have fled and the gods who are yet to arrive, will find some semblance of hope for a promised return. Likewise, the search for the dead God undertaken by Nietzsche’s madman in The Gay Science will find direction and hope with the realization that there will be encounters with the holy along the way. As long as the madman gratefully greets these encounters with a remembering-thinking that takes to heart and keeps safe that which results from such holy overtures, he will move ever closer to finding the absent God.
Notes

3 Ibid., 106.
13 Nietzsche, 181.
23 Ibid., 285.
28 Ibid., 141.
31 Ibid., 172.
32 Ibid., 123.
34 Ibid., 76.
35 Heidegger, “What are Poets for?,” 141.
36 Ibid., 94.
37 Ibid., 141.
38 Heidegger, “Remembrance,” 133.
39 Del Caro, 111.
40 Ibid., 109.
42 Ibid., 158.
43 Del Caro, 113.
44 Heidegger, “Remembrance,” 158.
45 Ibid.
46 Heidegger, “What are Poets for?,” 94.
47 Heidegger, “Remembrance,” 133.
48 Ibid., 143.
49 Ibid., 141.
51 Heidegger, “Remembrance,” 142.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., 141.
54 Ibid., 142.
55 Ibid.
58 Heidegger, “Remembrance,” 142.
59 Ibid., 141.
60 Ibid., 133.
61 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 109.
66 Ibid., 112.
68 Weineck, 113.
69 Luijpen, Phenomenology and Atheism, 252.
73 Ibid., 57.
74 Ibid., 57-58
81 Ibid.
82 Vattimo, 3.
84 Ibid., 98-99.
92 Ibid., 100.
97 Colony, 80.
102 Ibid.
104 Heidegger, “Nietzsche’s Word: ‘God is Dead,’” 112.
113 Gray, 63.
115 Heidegger, “Remembrance,” 119, 120.
116 Ibid., 124.
118 Ibid., 103.
120 Casey, “Remembering,” 182.
121 Gray, 63.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., 178, 181.
125 Ibid., 196.
126 Ibid., 199.
127 Ibid., 203.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid., 231.
131 Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 203.
132 Ibid., 139.
133 Ibid., 140.
134 Ibid., 145.
135 Del Caro, 113.
137 Ibid., 172.
139 Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 142.
Reprise

We shall not cease from exploration
And at the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

— T.S. Elliot
Little Gidding

Chapter One

In revisiting chapter one in order to render an evaluation about its effectiveness to achieve its intended goals, it becomes clear that it was successful. This is not to imply that the chapter could not have realized its purpose by means of some other strategy or that its manner of proceeding exhausted every possible avenue of exploration. Instead, by fastening upon Heidegger’s chief concern — the question of the meaning of Being — and selectively exposing the various creative ways he attempted to address this concern, chapter one was able to cultivate a meaningful appreciation of Heidegger’s unique place in Western thinking.

Not only did the chapter successfully expose Heidegger’s distinctive contributions to Western philosophy, it also laid an important foundation for the successful attainment of the overall goals of the current work. It would be reckless and counterproductive to cull through Heidegger’s later writings and with the discovery of any mention of God, the gods, or the holy conclude that he has issued an equivocal statement of worth for theological endeavors. Chapter one negates any such facile attempts of rapprochement between theology and the later Heidegger and thus respects the integrity of the work of the discipline and the person.
The key to appreciating Heidegger is by developing a sense of why and how he, as a philosopher, approaches the question of the meaning of Being. Once this sensibility is in place, then it becomes possible to advance carefully and cautiously theological speculations with credibility. What did chapter one unearth regarding Heidegger’s creative approach to Being? The first requirement necessary to ask anew the question of the meaning of Being is to dismantle the very structure that has misguided this question for 2,500 years — Western philosophy/metaphysics. What was most debilitating about the method used by metaphysics to study Being was its choice to focus on beings. These entities were seen as the avenue to Being because they had a tangible reality and presence. Thus, beginning with Plato and Aristotle a bias is established that favors beings and things which permeates all of Western thought for centuries. The age of technology becomes a defining point that shows how this philosophical bias found articulation beyond its more abstract concerns. Much of technology devotes its energy to the domination and manipulation of nature and things with little regard for a larger context.

The impoverishment of the meaning of Being and any resultant deleterious side effects could have been avoided, according to Heidegger, if more exclusive attention had been devoted to Being itself. The pre-Socratic philosophers were the more authentic practitioners of philosophy and provide the answer to a revitalized philosophy that properly rethinks the meaning of Being. They fostered an “attuned correspondence with Being.” As esoteric as this may sound, Heidegger believes that all philosophers had this ability but nonetheless turned a deaf ear to Being’s call. This was clearly the case in the way that philosophers traditionally treated the ontological difference — the formal concept that delineates the distinction between Being and beings. While acknowledging
this distinction and counting the ontological difference among its conceptual rubrics, philosophy ignored the potential offered by the distinction itself and opted to devote fullest attention to beings (what is present) to the detriment of Being (the event of presencing). As seen in chapter one, it was Heidegger’s recommendation to accept wholeheartedly the dynamic of distinction between Being and beings. By a meditative-recollective “step back” (*Schritt zurück*) into the mysterious region of the differing difference between Being and beings an attuned correspondence will be effected between Being and the willing philosopher. The most important result of the intimacy created between the philosopher and Being is her sensitized awareness that Being has a mysterious self-concealing dimension which ironically puts it in proximity with nothingness (*das Nichts*). The philosopher who willingly accepts Being’s tendency to conceal itself as it reveals itself as well as Being’s affinity with the nothing will experience a genuine re-thinking of the meaning of being in ranks with the pre-Socratics. They were the first to enjoy an attuned correspondence with Being and were not afraid to take ownership of the deeper mysteries of Being as famously articulated by Heraclitus’ aphorism, “Being loves to hide itself.”

It becomes clear from the foregoing that any attempt to apply Heidegger to theology must be well grounded in his revisionistic approaches to the question of the meaning of Being. As tempting as it is from a theological perspective to quickly apply the mysterious operations of Being to the transcendent nature of God, this would be a “false step” in the words of John Macquarrie. This is the case primarily because Heidegger himself disallows any such simplistic interchangeability between Being and God. Instead of equating Being with God, which would then give license to a neat overlay of all of
Being’s characteristics upon God and vice-versa, Heidegger gives primacy to Being. This however does not establish an implacable barrier between Being and God, but rather establishes a priority from which any advancement about Being may redound to God but only in a refracted and indirect way — “Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy is the essence of the divinity to be thought. Only in the light of the essence of the divinity can it be thought or said what the word ‘God’ is to signify.”

Thus, an exciting area of further research that chapter one offers is to probe more deeply the theological impact of understanding God through the prism of Being. At the most basic level it could be asked whether or not it is beneficial for theology to concern itself with Being in order to arrive at a meaningful articulation about the nature of God. Essential to this expansion would be a thorough examination of past attempts to wed Being and God. Did these reflections yield an enriched understanding of God or was the result merely the abstract God of the philosophers — before whom humanity can neither sing or pray? It would also be important to contextualize any expansion in the current mindset of postmodernity. Most instructive along these lines would be the work of the philosopher Jean-Luc Marion. He is a part of the recent “theological turn” in French phenomenology and has advanced a controversial argument for a God free of all categories of Being. In God without Being (University of Chicago Press, 1991), Marion challenges the premise of both metaphysics and neo-Thomist theology that God must be and recommends locating God in the realm of Christian love.
Chapter Two

The efforts of the second chapter derived their inspiration and motivation from the insight of Hugo Ott. He counseled that Heidegger could only be fully understood when his origins are taken into consideration. This might seem at first glance to be counterproductive to the overall mission of the current project with its sights set on the writings of the later Heidegger and the impact they have on the theology of God. However, the return to Heidegger’s beginnings leads to some surprising theological discoveries that can be seen as foundational and abidingly formative to Heidegger’s lifelong philosophical endeavor. Late in his career Heidegger acknowledges that his early theological interests left a deep impact on his philosophical work. The chapter cited this glowing admission that surfaced during an exchange between Heidegger and a Japanese professor in the early 1950s. At one point in their discussion of hermeneutics and language, professor Tezuka observes that Heidegger is “at home in theology,” to which Heidegger tellingly responds, “Without this theological background I should have never come upon the path of thinking. But origin always comes to meet us from the future.” While due caution must be exercised so as not to over romanticize this acknowledgment in order to promote a theological agenda, the chapter pointed out how scholarly consensus accords the statement legitimacy as a genuine moment of self-disclosure for Heidegger. Plaudits from commentators aside, the chapter took great lengths to go back and investigate for itself the theological origins to which Heidegger pays homage. What the investigation revealed was that Heidegger’s personal engagement with Christianity could best be described as tumultuous, ambiguous, and even inconsistent throughout the earliest phases of his career.
However, one point during those early years stood out as a moment of stability in Heidegger’s relationship with Christian theology when he taught a course titled “Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion” (hereafter IPR) in the winter semester of 1920-21 at the University of Freiburg in Breisgau. What was seen to be the force of stabilization in Heidegger’s interaction with theology was the presence in the course of yet another formative influence — phenomenology. Heidegger teaches the course as a philosopher at the high point in his relationship with Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. Thus, the methodology and thematic interests of phenomenology are palpable throughout the course. Ultimately, the Parousia emerges in the course as the focal point for the early Christian experience as clearly articulated in Paul’s correspondence to the church at Thessalonica. And while Heidegger found it necessary to modify the phenomenology he learned from Husserl in order to make it more effective at fully exposing the depths of the primal Christian experience (Urchristentum), the positive influence of phenomenology is undeniable. Not only did phenomenology allow Heidegger to have a balanced interaction with theology during the short time that he offered the IPR course, but more importantly, the topics that came to the fore because of the phenomenological influences became lasting topics of concern throughout the remainder of his career. For instance, challenges surrounding the issues of intersubjectivity and temporality appear again and again in Heidegger’s texts. Despite the expansions and nuances that take place in these areas, the impact that phenomenology had upon the early Heidegger as he formulated his thoughts on the early Christian experience of the Parousia abides. Heidegger maintained that the factual life experience of the first Christians was a temporalized struggle best expressed by the Thessalonians
who lived each day under the daunting uncertainty of the when of the Parousia with vigilance and preparedness. Moreover, it was the special bond (*Mitgang*) that existed between them and Paul that enabled this early Christian community to live their faith with a special temporal awareness that fully integrated past, present and future. They confronted the daily present challenges cognizant of their past heritage with a sense of hope in Jesus’ futural Second Coming.

The main reason for devoting a chapter to a point in Heidegger’s life where theological concerns are most blatantly addressed was to show that a continuity exists throughout Heidegger’s long and prolific career. This is necessary because of the tendency to bifurcate the works of Heidegger according to the accepted division of the early and later periods. While it is within the bounds of scholarly consensus to accept that a turning (*die Kehre*) took place in Heidegger’s emphases which lends credence to an early and later division, this work has repeatedly argued for a continuity after the so-called turn — the early and later Heidegger are distinct but not separate! No where is this more evident than in the way that certain issues which arose in the IPR course of the early 1920s find reformulation decades later. Why this is most relevant for the current endeavor is because the issues in question are not just treated early on and revisited at a later time in a generic way, e.g. temporality. Instead, the blatant theological treatment that these issues receive earlier with the help of phenomenology resurface but in a less obvious way. For instance, the young Heidegger has no qualms about addressing the temporalized struggle of the early church to live the between time of Jesus’ resurrection/ascension and his return. Later, Heidegger is seen making veiled theological references, but doing so by using the same themes to confront similar challenges. As was
seen in chapters three and four, the post-turn Heidegger capitalizes on the realm of the
between and the temporal aplomb of the poet to synthesize past, present and future. This
realm and the poetic activity become elements for authentic rooted human dwelling that
measures itself against the Godhead and also for effectively confronting the needy
between time of godlessness — the gods/God who have fled and the gods/God who are
yet to arrive. Thus, this chapter successfully achieved an important goal to show that the
very early Heidegger’s explicit interests and approach to the early Christian experience of
God resurface in his later writings, but in a generalized and non-committal way where
humanity is vexed by elusive encounters with gods, the Holy, God, the Sacred.

Though this chapter opens several avenues for further reflection, one area that
was briefly touched upon throughout and minimally addressed in the closing pages that
deserves closer examination is faith. In the sections of the IPR course covered here
Heidegger fails to acknowledge the importance of the virtue of faith for the
Thessalonians who live the temporalized struggle associated with the Parousia. However,
if it were possible it would be a worthy and exciting venture from a theological
perspective to closely examine the IPR course in tandem with a later text where
Heidegger explicitly discusses faith. In the 1927 essay “’Phenomenology and Theology,”
Heidegger identifies Christianity with faith. As a result the proper roles of philosophy and
theology get circumscribed vis-à-vis the life of faith. Philosophy is best seen as
“atheistic,” according to Heidegger, since it is beyond its competency when addressing
matters of faith. Theology, on the other hand, is best suited to cultivate the exercise of
faith and fully illuminates the vicissitudes of the experience in a scholarly way. As a
result of this weighty responsibility, theology must be continually self-critical to ensure that its advancement of faith does not become ineffectual or stale.

The ability to examine the work where Heidegger closely discusses the matter of faith in tandem with the IPR course would be greatly facilitated by the recent publication in English of the entire contents of the IPR course (The Phenomenology of Religious Life, Indiana University Press, 2004). Not only would this particular exercise benefit from the availability of the full English rendering of the course, but also any recourse to these lectures for varied theological pursuits in the future will be greatly enhanced. This chapter’s analysis relied on the limited availability of English translations and paraphrases of only certain sections of the IPR course. As a result, it was necessary to consult the original German on a regular basis.

Chapter Three

What is most striking when returning to chapter three is the realization that it is the point where the thesis of the dissertation realizes a sustained articulation. By selectively focusing on pertinent writings and utterances of the later Heidegger it becomes clear that there is a pronounced openness (be it ever so tentative and implicit) toward the ultimate theological concern — God. The chapter was successful throughout in respecting the tentative and implicit nature of this openness. To ensure that a theological dialogue takes place with Heidegger on points that enjoy a thematic consistency in his later corpus, it was necessary often times to counsel against hasty theological applications. In other words, what the chapter demonstrated was the need to postpone what might appear to be an immediate source of theological gratification when reading the later Heidegger with a sympathetic eye.
For instance, at one point a well-known staple of the later Heidegger was discussed — the Fourfold (*das Geviert*). The Fourfold permits Heidegger, in a most general way, to expand upon the understanding of world. He insists that whatever world one encounters and however that world in each case may be structured, it can always be understood in terms of four basic ontological regions: heaven, earth, gods and mortals. While theological appetites are easily whetted by Heidegger’s mention of gods as co-constitutive of world, a first recommendation to postpone immediate theological gratification comes when interest is diverted to the greater importance of the relational dynamic in and among the regions of the Fourfold. Mortals, for example, are said to be in the Fourfold only when they “dwell” in accordance with the unique relational demands required by the other three regions — heaven, earth, gods. Finally, then, it would seem that the theological conversation is ready to begin on a well-grounded Heideggerian footing. All that needs to be done in order to proceed is to focus on what he says about the mortal-gods dynamic. However, as simple and attractive as this route may seem, yet another detour was recommended which would lead to a more profound and lasting Heideggerian conversation with theology about God. Pursuing the mortal-earth dynamic actually proved to be the more productive route.

Not only does Heidegger give primacy to the mortal-earth dynamic among the others in the Fourfold, but by carefully examining this dynamic the importance of the earth also comes to be appreciated. Earth, for the later Heidegger, becomes expressive of what remains hidden and mysterious. This was shown in the way that earth functions in a work of art. Using van Gogh’s painting of a pair of peasant shoes as an example, Heidegger asserts that any artwork exhibits both a worldly and earthly character. The
worldly aspect allows the purveyor of the work to perceive that which is most apparent and obvious. On the other hand, the earthly quality “shelters” the hidden meaning of the work and so invites innumerable encounters that allow the work to gradually and slowly reveal itself — though never completely.

By exposing these implications of earth in the later Heidegger and coupling them with the mortal-earth dynamic of the Fourfold, the theological ramifications become clearer. Humans (mortals) dwell on the earth and the earth itself is always a reality that shelters the hidden, therefore, humans dwell in the fullest sense with mystery. All due caution must be exercised at this point not to make a neat theological connection between Heidegger’s recommendation to dwell comfortably in mystery and theology’s assertions to live with God. However by allowing the conversation between Heidegger and theology to follow along the lines established by key concepts consistently advanced by the later Heidegger, the conversation can continue. In other words, it was not enough to feel contented that Heidegger mentions the gods as one aspect of the Fourfold. That unto itself leads nowhere. Instead, by focusing on the mortal-earth dynamic of the Fourfold the issue of human dwelling on earth led to an appreciation of the affinity between humanity and mystery. This in turn allows for pursuing what Heidegger means by mystery. Therefore in another section of the chapter Heidegger’s notions of meditative thinking were treated. One of the requirements of meditative thinking is “openness to the mystery.” This is not only coincidentally related to proper human dwelling on the earth but is actually instrumental in restoring this dwelling, so compromised by the alienating effect of technology’s dominance, to a deeper sense of being “rooted” upon the earth.
The conversation ensues with the natural question from theological quarters as to whether or not Heidegger’s “openness to mystery,” replete as it is with salutary effects, is tenable as an openness to God. It was asserted in the chapter that Heidegger’s openness to the mystery was a theological intimation at best. While such openness for him had the promise of restoring rooted human dwelling upon the earth, a more solid theological connection that implicates God is made by turning attention to the way Heidegger qualifies dwelling. In another place of the later writings Heidegger insists that humans dwell “poetically” on earth and that furthermore to dwell poetically means “to stand in the presence of the gods.”

To stand in the presence of the gods does not mean, however, that the encounter will be one marked by full disclosure. Instead, there will be an inexpressible dimension to the encounter. This only gets conveyed by Heidegger if he is allowed to explain that the poet takes a “measure” of the human-divine encounter. The chapter showed that when the poet measures or gauges humanity’s relationship to the Godhead there will be alternating opportunities for presence and absence. Allowing the conversation to reach this point shows that Heidegger, in very indirect ways, can concur with mainline theological tenets such as God’s immanence and transcendence.

The mention of poets and poetic activity to accomplish lofty ends in the Heideggerian schema is no incidental reference. The chapter began by suggesting that the poet would be most effective during the current “needy time” of the gods’/God’s heightened elusiveness. It is a “between” time since the old gods have fled and the new gods are yet to arrive. That the poet is able comfortably and effectively to inhabit this between time is yet another conversation starter with theology. However, as it was
shown, the poet’s ability to inhabit the between is predicated on Heidegger’s well-established conviction that the between of the ontological difference brings greater understanding to the mystery of Being. Again, it is an indirect and often circuitous route that leads to meaningful dialogue between the later Heidegger and theology.

One possible area of expansion that this chapter invites is a greater study of Heidegger’s brief affiliation with the Nazi party and the effect this had on his philosophy. As outlined above, the chapter devoted a great deal of attention to the restoration of authentic rooted dwelling for contemporary humanity. It was argued that the concepts of earth and home, which are instrumental to any such restored dwelling, were beyond the confines of any specific geographic place. However in light of the controversy that has surfaced with the disclosure of Heidegger’s support of the Third Reich and his subsequent silence about his involvement with the regime, there would be divergent opinions about Heidegger’s call to become rooted or to dwell authentically in some place. Therefore, if time and space allowed, it would be worthwhile to question whether or not Heidegger was promoting a nationalism whereby Germany is the only true place where true rooted dwelling can be achieved. And if it is this sort of nationalism that allowed him to readily embrace the National Socialist movement in Germany, then what effect did it have on his philosophy, and moreover how does this impact upon theological applications of his philosophy? The writings of Emmanuel Lévinas would greatly facilitate this avenue of study.

Chapter Four

Whereas chapter three advanced the tentative and indirect ways that the God of theology surfaces in the later Heidegger, chapter four assumes a very different approach.
Instead of examining the various texts to find places where phrases associated with God occur and then grounding these within the entire Heideggerian program in order to make some connection to theological interests, this chapter is more straightforward. It sees a direct link between theology’s study of God and the later Heidegger’s abiding concern for the current era as marked by a pervasive sense of godlessness. While at first blush such an era would seem to have no use for theology, it ironically is an unprecedented moment of opportunity for theology. Being a philosopher and not a theologian, Heidegger never directly invokes theology as being summoned to a defining moment in history.

Nonetheless the theologian who is open to voices, such as Heidegger’s, which are outside the discipline can find in this time of conjectured godlessness a productive challenge. As an initial response to such a claim, the theologian might see her task as one that merely refutes the outright charge that she lives in a godless period of time. Ample manifestations of grace bolstered by traditional theological tenets and the gift of faith could be effective in the refutation. The theologian following Heidegger’s prompts will assume an entirely different tack. Rather than perceiving godlessness as a threat to be quickly checked, it is best to embrace it and work through it in the hope that new ways are opened to talk about God. In other words, if there is no God and likewise no assumed effectual platform upon which to discuss and present God, then it is incumbent upon theology to re-examine its understanding of God in order to arrive at new ways of discourse that articulate who God is that are relevant and credible. This chapter was successful at inviting theology to journey with Heidegger in the varied ways that
godlessness piqued his interests with the intent to deepen and further its work through alternative (perhaps for many unusual) means.

That Heidegger provides alternative or unconventional sources for theology is without question. Nonetheless, those who remain open and even tolerant will experience a broadening of perspective — not without some related frustration and even pain along the way. For instance, an immediate chord of dissonance is struck for mainline theological ears when Heidegger’s recourse to the poet Friedrich Hölderlin is examined. The chapter indicated that Hölderlin’s manner of addressing the current era of godlessness, which captivated Heidegger, was described as a “needy” time that operates under a double lack — the no-more of the gods who have fled and the not-yet of the gods to come. This can be immediately off-putting for some in theology because of the choice of “gods” to address the challenge of godlessness. Heidegger himself, as it was shown at different points in the dissertation, was very imprecise in the way that he referenced the deity. He can be found using various expressions without consistency, even within the same context, to discuss the godly — the holy, gods, God. The advice offered to mollify any discomfort that these terms occasion was to keep in mind that Heidegger wrote as a philosopher and so was not careful to maintain a vocabulary when treating divine matters that would be agreeable to traditional monotheistic conventions. Likewise, in Heidegger’s approach to Hölderlin, he is not put off by the very imprecise use of terms that Hölderlin employs. As a result, the theologian who desires to learn from Heidegger’s concern for godlessness must be open not only to his consistent lack of monotheistic expressions but moreover to his willingness to seek out other writers who exhibit a similar inconsistency.
With that spirit of openness comes the opportunity to discover the theological riches in Heidegger’s exegesis of several Hölderlinian works that expand upon the initial claim of double godlessness — the gods who have fled and the gods who have yet to come. Heidegger allows Hölderlin to present the poet as the person most suited to effectively confront the nothingness of the gods’ double absence. In the overwhelming backdrop of this godlessness, the poet exhibits a venturesome spirit. By imbibing the dark light wine of the fragrant cup — an essential gesture of commitment to the poetic vocation — the poet perspicaciously points out the “traces” of the elusive deities. What is most theologially promising in Heidegger’s synthesis of Hölderlin is the fact that the poet, despite all the glowing attestations to bring about some sense of the gods’ presence, remains a humble mediator between the divinities and humankind. With a sense of wonder and humility the poet indicates the bright traces of the fled/coming gods as points of contact for humanity that are never at her behest but rather at the initiative and discretion of the gods.

Hölderlin’s intoxicated poet who bravely confronts the dark night of godless nothingness to point out the bright traces of the elusive deities is but one alternative and unusual source that Heidegger consults in order to confront the issue of godlessness. If this stretched theological openness to new levels, the next source will require an even greater degree of elasticity. In turning to Nietzsche, Heidegger goes from Hölderlin’s intoxicated poet who indicates divine traces to a market place madman in Nietzsche’s The Gay Science who concomitantly searches for God and announces God’s death. What is most unsettling is the claim that God did not die of natural causes but instead was murdered by humankind. Any solace that might be had here because Nietzsche uses the
more acceptable expression of God (singular) with uniformity is quickly dashed by the outrageous quality of what is being said about God.

A first line of defense that was recommended in the chapter in order to retain theological interest in Heidegger’s recourse to Nietzsche was that Nietzsche is not advocating atheism in these passages from *The Gay Science*. While making no attempt to downplay or whitewash Nietzsche’s well known invectives against Christian theology, ample scholarly support lends credence to Heidegger’s interpretation that the madman invites a search for the dead God as opposed to reveling in God’s demise. If God’s death occasions a search then the theological opportunities abound. At the most basic level, the search is on for a replacement. As disconcerting as this may be, when presented by Heidegger as a philosopher in the backdrop of the history of philosophy, a new understanding of God should be sought that replaces the God of metaphysics. Beyond the context provided by Western philosophy, the challenge to theology to come up with a replacement for a dead God in a less literal way is a charge to take stock of how God has been presented. Are there better ways to present God today that should replace or enhance the previous and accepted ways in which God was articulated?

Whether it is Nietzsche’s dead God or Hölderlin’s fled/coming gods, the issue of godlessness is best confronted and alleviated according to Heidegger by means of a novel commemorative thinking (*andenken*) that has resonance with prayer. Moreover it is a disposition that involves the entire person. Heidegger uses the comportment of greeting to express the way in which the remembering-thinking conveys a devotional quality in its receptivity to overtures from the elusive deity. He resorts to a particular use of the holy at this point in order to indicate the theological possibilities when the gesture of greeting is
joined with meditative remembering-thinking. In Heidegger’s schema, the holy permits access to God and regulates God’s availability. Essentially, the holy is a dimension on par with Being and is God’s dwelling place. It is Heidegger’s contention, with the assistance of Hölderlin’s poetry, that the holy sends out greetings which amount to experiences of God’s presence. Thus, it becomes imperative that a suitable human greeting receives this holy greeting in order to address the overwhelming sense of godlessness. The greeting that most effectively receives the greeting of the holy is one that is accompanied by a remembering-thinking. This embodied gesture takes the greeting of the holy to heart and keeps it safe but never in a manipulative or grasping way. Because all such encounters with the greetings of the holy will be received as a gift, gratitude will be added to the greeting that greets the holy. Therefore, remembering-thinking thanking embodied as a gesture of greeting will receive the greeting of the holy and provide hope to the plight of godlessness.

The discussion of the place of remembering in the overall Heideggerian comportment of a remembering-thinking thanking that greets the greeting of the holy affords an exciting opportunity for further study. Remembering and memory play such significant roles in Christian religious experience that it would be productive to sketch out these varied roles against Heidegger’s assertions that remembering/memory possess devotional qualities. A possible dialogue partner with Heidegger on this score would be Augustine. Throughout the Confessions he develops the unique role that remembering/memory plays in forging an intimate relationship between God and humans.
Appendix-I

“Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion”
Winter Semester: November 1920 — February 1921
University of Freiburg im Breisgau

Course Outline

Part One: (8 lectures)

*Introduction to the Phenomenon of Factical Life-experience*

Part Two: (16 Lectures)

*A Phenomenological Interpretation of Original Christianity in St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians and Thessalonians*

Section One: *How Original Christianity is a Factical Life-Experience*

Section Two: *How Original Christianity, as Factical Life-Experience, is Primordial Temporality*

A Winter Evening

Window with falling snow is arrayed,
Long tolls the vesper bell,
The house is provided well,
The table is for many laid.

Wandering ones, more than a few,
Come to the door on darksome courses.
Golden blooms the tree of graces
Drawing up the earth’s cool dew.

Wanderer quietly steps within;
Pain has turned the threshold to stone.
There lie, in limpid brightness shown,
Upon the table bread and wine.

Georg Trakl

Ein Winterabend

Wenn der Schnee ans Fenster fällt,
Lang die Abendglocke läutet,
Vielen ist der Tisch bereitet
Und das Haus ist wohlbestellt.

Mancher auf der Wanderschaft
Kommt ans Tor auf dunklen Pfaden.
Golden blüht der Baum der Gnaden
Aus der Erde kühlem Saft.

Wanderer tritt still herein;
Schmerz versteinerte die Schwelle.
Da ergänzt in reiner Helle
Auf dem Tische Brot und Wein.

Georg Trakl


Appendix-3

Remembrance

The northeast wind blows,
Of winds the dearest
To me, because a fiery spirit
And a good voyage it promises to mariners.
But go now and greet
The beautiful Garonne,
And the gardens of Bordeaux
There, where along the sharp bank
Runs the path and into the river
Deep falls the brook, but above
Gaze out a noble pair
Of oaks and white poplars;

Still I remember this well, how
The broad treetops of the elm wood
Lean over the mill,
But in the courtyard a fig-tree grows.
On holidays there too
Walk the brown women
On silken soil,
In the month of March,
When night and day are equal
And over slow paths,
Heavy with golden dreams,
Lulling breezes drift.

But someone pass me,
Full of dark light,
The fragrant cup,
So that I may rest; for sweet
Would be slumber in the shade.
It is not good
To be soulless with mortal
Thoughts. But a
Conversation is good and to say
The heart’s intention, to hear much
About days of love,
And deeds which occurred.

But where are the friends? Bellarmin
With his companion? Many
Are shy of going to the source;
For richness begins namely
In the sea. They,
Like painters, bring together
The beauty of the earth and disdain
Not the winged war, and
To dwell alone, for years, beneath
The leafless mast, where through the night gleam neither
The holidays of the town,
Nor lyre-music and native dancing.

But now to the Indies
The men have gone,
There to the windy peak
On vine-covered hills, where down
The Dordogne comes
And together with the magnificent
Garonne as wide as the sea
The river flows out. But it is
The sea that takes and gives memory,
And love too fixes attentive eyes
But what remains is founded by the poets.

Friedrich Hölderlin

The madman. – Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: “I seek God! I seek God!” – As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? – Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. “Whither is God?” he cried; “I will tell you. We have killed him – you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

“How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us – for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto.”

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. “I have come too early,” he said then; “my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars – and yet they have done it themselves.”

It has been related further that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his requiem aeternam deo. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but: “What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?”

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