The thought of Martin Heidegger (arguably one of the most outstanding thinkers of our century) has had a long-lasting impact on a number of disciplines. One of the disciplines that Heidegger influenced most was theology—both Catholic and Protestant. In a sense, we may even say that this was the discipline that Heidegger’s thinking affected most.¹ Karl Rahner, one of the leading Catholic theologians of our century, once a disciple of Heidegger, has gone so far as to claim that “present-day Catholic theology ... is inconceivable without Martin Heidegger.”²

By way of introduction to my topic, let me set out by evoking a few recent or contemporary appraisals of the relation between Heidegger and theology.

With the exception of the times of Kant, Spinoza, and Hegel, it has surely never occurred before, Alfred Jäger claimed, that vast theological circles within Catholicism and Protestantism, for decades, had been so much under the magic spell (be this attractive or repulsive) of a philo-

¹ “Surely, theology was the science,” wrote Otto Pöggeler, “in which the impulses coming from Heidegger proved to have the most decisive effects” (O. Pöggeler, Heidegger und die hermeneutische Philosophie [Freiburg/München: Alber, 1983], 414). Bibliographical Remark: Heidegger’s works will be cited with abbreviations. The abbreviations for the Gesamtausgabe volumes take the form of the letters GA followed by volume number, colon, and page numbers. Full bibliographical data are provided at the end of the notes. If there are references to both the original German text and the corresponding English translation the German pagination and the English pagination are separated by a slash. For example: “SZ 10/30,” “GA 20: 417/301f.” “the number before the slash indicating the German edition, the one after the slash the English edition. Other abbreviations: WS = winter semester, SS = Summer semester.

sophical thinker. One may speak, without much exaggeration, about a
period in the history of theology that has been linked to the name of
Heidegger. Heidegger’s silent and vast greatness as a thinker lay in the
background of the theological debates even where (or, in particular
where) he was not explicitly named as a partner of dialogue, and, as
such, was not officially interpreted—namely, in the circle of the “herme-
neuticians.”

Within the theologians’ interest in Heidegger’s thought, Richard
Schaeffler registered a more or less clear distinction between the way
Protestant theologians have approached Heidegger’s work, on the one
hand, and the way Catholic theologians, or theologically interested
Catholic philosophers, adopted his thought, on the other. Whereas the
former have read the early Heidegger predominantly as the author of
the analysis of human existence, and in turning to the later Heidegger
have been fascinated by the philosopher of the language-event, the latter
have primarily been attracted by Heidegger’s coupling of the ontological
approach with the transcendental-philosophical method.

With regard to the latter, John D. Caputo wrote, “Rahner, Lotz, and
Coreth have all attempted to develop a transcendental Thomism which
goes back not only to Kant but specifically to Being and Time... They
have tried to root St. Thomas’ notion of esse in an inherent dynamism
of the intellect.” Caputo calls to mind that “[i]n a brief but quite
illuminating study of Heidegger’s ‘existential philosophy,’ written in
1940, Karl Rahner argues, in keeping with Heidegger, for the impor-
tance of taking up the question of Being from a transcendental stand-
point,” the reason being that “an access to Being through the human
subject must first be established.”

Regarding specifically Heidegger’s relation to Rahner, Annemarie
Gethmann-Siefert takes Rahner to be one of Heidegger’s close disciples.
She argues that both Rahner’s dissertation, Geist in Welt, and his

4 See Richard Schaeffler, Frömmigkeit des Denkens? Martin Heidegger und die
katholische Theologie (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978),
x.
5 John D. Caputo, Heidegger and Aquinas. An Essay on Overcoming Metaphysics
(New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 95. The study Caputo referred to
was published with the title “Introduction au concept de philosophie existentiale
chez Heidegger,” in Recherches des sciences religieuses 30 (1940): 152-71;
English translation: “The Concept of Existential Philosophy in Heidegger,”
Sheehan, Karl Rahner: The Philosophical Foundations. Preface by Karl Rahner,
S.J. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1987), who claims that the original
German draft of Rahner’s paper has been lost (p. 6). See further Caputo,
subsequent work, *Hörer des Wortes*, make an attempt to connect Heidegger’s question concerning the meaning of Being with elements of Thomistic philosophy, in order thereby to elaborate a fundamental theology. The theological utilization of Heidegger’s thought obviously points to the issue of the relation between theology and philosophy in Heidegger’s thought, and this is what Gethmann-Siefert particularly proposes to inquire into in her work by reconstructing and interpreting the sources—the relevant Heideggerian writings, passages, and considerations—accessible at the time.

This point leads me closer to my topic, and prepares the ground for an important realization. For if we consider a philosophy’s influence on theology in general it seems quite natural to conceive of this relation in traditional terms, namely, in terms of theology’s utilization of a certain philosophical outlook and conceptuality, for its own purposes. On this view, theology’s use of Heidegger would mean that, in several important respects, theology had found Heidegger’s philosophy fruitful or prolific for its own doctrinal self-explication. Thereby, however, we would already have drawn upon, or put into motion (obviously and tacitly, as it were), a traditional understanding of the relation of philosophy and theology. According to this, theology may or may not find a certain philosophy useful for elaborating and communicating in conceptual terms what it knows separately from, and independently of philosophy. If our question is directed towards the relation between Heidegger and theology, after some preliminary exploration we are bound to realize, however, that this relation, far from being one-sided, is rather reciprocal; it cannot be conceived of purely in terms of the question of how Heidegger influenced theology, but must equally be treated in terms of the decisive import of theology for Heidegger’s path of thinking. This, then, might be, on a first approach, the reason for (and the cause of) Heidegger’s subsequent impact on theology.

“That Heidegger has given essential impulses to theologians is widely known,” wrote Richard Schaeffler. “That in his turn he has likewise embraced essential stimuli from theology has however been largely disregarded yet.” In this respect, Schaeffler reminded us of some basic facts of Heidegger biography: that before going over to study philosophy, Heidegger had studied theology for four semesters at the University of Freiburg; that he had done so at the time of the modernism debate; that in the person of Carl Braig he had come across a mentor

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and a teacher particularly concerned to bring Catholic theology and philosophy into a mutual relationship; that in his habilitation work, which he dedicated to a text of medieval philosophy, Heidegger was confronted for the first time with problems pertaining to the philosophy of language subsequently to play a great role in his later thinking, and that he had come across the whole problematic from a perspective shaped by eminently theological experiences and questions. This was followed by teaching Catholic philosophy for three semesters under the protection of the theologian Engelbert Krebs—a period to be interrupted by the war service. 8

Shortly after Heidegger had accepted the call to Marburg, Gadamer recalls a remark Heidegger made during an evening discussion: "in order to come back to itself, it is the veritable task of theology to look for the word capable of calling one to faith and to preserving one in it." This formulation sounded, for Gadamer, like a real assignment for theology. Gadamer thinks that the real questions that were stirring in Heidegger from the very beginning were theological questions. 9

In view of these introductory remarks, I can now proceed to make a preliminary hermeneutical consideration. From what has been said thus far (and especially from Gadamer's hint), it must be sufficiently clear that it is not quite correct to interpret Heidegger's influence on theology in traditional terms, that is, in terms of a philosopher's influence on theology (the way, for example, Jäger does in the above cited passages). Indeed, this way of putting things is to be regarded, at best, as the theological (or one theological) way of conceiving the relationship between theology and philosophy—one that not necessarily gets corroborated by philosophers, and that, in any case, openly clashes with Heidegger's own self-interpretation. In other words: the influence of the philosopher Martin Heidegger on theology is not at all self-evident, it is not to be taken for granted. Rather, we have reason to raise and pursue

8 Ibid. Heidegger came to know Hegel and Schelling through Braig (see SD 82; GA 1: 57). On the importance of Braig and the Tübingen school of speculative theology for Heidegger, see Franco Volpi, “Alle origini della concezione heideggeriana dell'essere. Il trattato Vom Sein di Carl Braig,” Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia 34, n. 2, (1980): 183-94, esp. 188f. and John D. Caputo, Heidegger and Aquinas, 45ff. Caputo in particular shows several important anticipations of subsequent Heideggerian positions—such as, for example, the ontological difference—in Braig's work. On the Catholic Tübingen School, see Thomas F. O'Meara O. P., Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism. Schelling and the Theologians (London - Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982), esp. 138ff. For more secondary literature on Braig and the Tübingen school, see Caputo, Heidegger and Aquinas, 58f.

the issue concerning the precise sense in which he who was to exercise a great influence on theology later on may be said to have been a philosopher—namely, in his own self-image or according to his own self-interpretation.

In the past fifteen years or so which have gone by since the publication of Schaeffler's book (whose latest major achievement is marked in this regard by Theodore Kisiel's recently published meticulous work, full of new and up-to-date nowhere-else-available testimonies and documents on what he calls Heidegger's "Theo-logical Beginnings" and his "Religious-Philosophical Itinerary [1915-22]"), conspicuously more scholarly attention has been dedicated to—and much has accordingly come to light about—Heidegger's theological background and his lifelong connections to theology.11 There is an abundance of recently disclosed materials on and by the young and early Heidegger, including the publication (within and outside of his Gesamtausgabe) of a great many lecture courses and related manuscripts which extend from the end of World War I up to the publication of Being and Time.12 We are thus able to fill in the gap of the ten years of silence (1917-1927) and we are in a much better position to assess Heidegger's theological origins and affiliations when he set out on his own after the war and started the movement toward Being and Time. The issue can be pursued now on an incomparably wider textual basis than it could have been at the time Gadamer and Schaeffler were making their respective points.

From the vast domain of this research area (described in the subtitle of the present study) I wish to focus on Heidegger's self-interpretation as a philosopher; in other words, on philosophy's self-interpretation provided by Heidegger, or at least on some aspects of it. In doing so, for

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10These are the titles of chapter 2 and of its first subdivision in his The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time (Berkeley - Los Angeles - London: University of California Press, 1993), 69ff.
12Within the Gesamtausgabe (if I can count properly) precisely ten volumes have been published from this period up to now (end of 1994): GA 56/57, 58, 59, 61, 63 (1919-1923); GA 17, 19, 20, 21, 22 (1923-1926); to these, we should add some fundamentally important manuscripts, such as, for example, the Jaspers review (1919-21, in GA 9), the "Aristotle Introduction" (1922), the lecture on the concept of time (1924), as well as the Kassel lectures on Dilthey (1925). Not to be ignored are, precisely from our point of view, the newly discovered writings which the young Heidegger published in the Catholic review Der Akademiker between 1910 and 1913.
reasons that will become clear later in the paper, I will eventually come to center discussion on the theme of Heidegger's understanding of philosophy's atheism. Thereby the problematic of "philosophy, theology, and religion" on Heidegger's way to *Being and Time* will be united, or gathered together, under the heading of "Heidegger's understanding of philosophy's atheism." The hermeneutic import of such questioning (its genuine "Vorgriff," "pre-grasp" as it were) is thereby double, both historical and *sachlich*: namely, the attempt to find out something sufficiently interesting and relevant about Heidegger's itinerary, no less than about the *Sache selbst*, that is, "Philosophy, Theology, and Religion," as well as their relation.

To clarify the latter hermeneutical point a bit further, as well as to round off this introductory part, let me make a further point. In fact, in the light of the sources recently made available, and the extensive scholarly work done in the field, I think that we would describe Heidegger's development to a large extent in a simplified manner if we articulated the discussion of Heidegger's theological origins and affiliations along the lines of Schaeffler's description. On this account, before going over to philosophy, Heidegger had studied theology at the University of Freiburg, had then given up theology and dedicated himself entirely to philosophy, although, admittedly, theological problems and aspects did not remain alien to his thought later on and kept cropping up in his work every now and then. Indeed, put that way, this formulation tacitly claims always already to know (having always already decided) what philosophy and theology are, and, accordingly, what their relationship is. This approach shows considerable insensitivity to and little enthusiasm for a new thematization or re-examination concerning their essence and relation. Such a questioning would therefore preclude, in its own starting point, the possibility of learning something new from Heidegger about these two disciplines. This would be detrimental precisely because some of the key Heideggerian documents that have become available recently suggest that it was exactly with these most radical and fundamental questions—related to the foundations of both theology and philosophy—that he was intensely concerned when carrying out his hermeneutic breakthrough after the war. So we will do better to adopt a hermeneutic attitude of openness—one we may learn exactly from Heidegger himself—in order to make a conceptual and *sachliche* encounter possible with regard to what he has to say to us about philosophy and theology and their relation.

By way of an anticipatory summary, I would say that the understanding of philosophy that Heidegger is working out right after the war is interwoven with theological motives, while (parallel with it) he embarks on an overall re-examination of theology too, including its task, function, and relation to religion. The self-interpretation and self-iden-
tification as a philosopher, which he comes to adopt, is conditional upon an understanding of philosophy which is permeated by theological motives, or, may even be said to emerge owing to the radicalization of theological or religious motives. The other side of this process is that Heidegger puts into question the traditional self-understanding of theology too, including its relationship to philosophy.

In what follows I propose to illustrate this intricate process, first, by interpreting two key bibliographical documents and some related texts (including one by Overbeek who greatly affected the young Heidegger) by way of a first and rough exploration (I.), and, second, by concentrating more technically (and ever more closely) on some relevant passages of the recently published manuscripts (II.). Finally, I will briefly assess Heidegger's later thought in relation to the problematic discussed (III.).

1.

The two bibliographical documents are Heidegger's letters to Father Engelbert Krebs and his disciple Karl Löwith, written in 1919 and 1921, respectively. Both of them are widely known now and have been extensively commented. As far as I can see, however, they have not yet been treated together, or, in any case, not drawn on from the point of view I wish to single out. Let me first turn to the letter to Krebs (written on January 9, 1919), which in regard to the relation of theology and philosophy seems to be wholly compatible with the traditional view. Heidegger writes:

The past two years, in which I have taken pains to reach a fundamental clarification of my philosophical standpoint and so have laid aside all specialized scholarly tasks, have led me to results for which, had I any ties beyond philosophical ones, I could not have preserved the freedom of conviction and of what I taught.

Epistemological insights, extending as far as the theory of historical knowledge, have made the system of Catholicism problematic and unacceptable to me—but not Christianity and metaphysics (the latter, to be sure, in a new sense).... I believe that I have an inner call to philosophy and that by answering it in research and teaching I can do what lies within my powers for the internal vocation of the inner
man—and only for this—and thus justify my existence and work itself before God.¹³

This letter seems to be a decisive document or testimony of Heidegger’s change of commitment: his turn from theology to philosophy. The two major pieces of information contained in the letter are, first, that “the system of Catholicism” has become “problematic and unacceptable” to him, and, second, that he chooses philosophy as his vocation; and the two seem obviously to be connected. Heidegger’s loosening his ties with theology must obviously be seen as running parallel with, and being possibly effected by, his committing himself to philosophy. The letter can reasonably be claimed to be the document of the shift going on in Heidegger’s intellectual commitment; indeed there is no denying the fact that this is what the letter is about. A closer reading might of course discover certain reserves, overtones or accents which make things more complex, but, without dwelling on these now (which, incidentally, do not alter the essence, namely, that Heidegger distances himself from the system of Catholicism and opts for philosophy), let us hurry ahead to the other document, his letter to Karl Löwith on August 19, 1921. The main thoughts of the latter point exactly to the opposite direction. Heidegger here argues that it is a fundamental mistake to compare him to any of the creative philosophers, such as, for example, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Scheler. It is of course very much possible to do that (there is no hindrance to do that [“Das ist unverwehrt”]), but, then, he goes on to argue,

... I must say that I am not a philosopher. I do not even claim to be doing anything of the sort; I have no intention to do that either.... I work concretely and factically out of my “I am,” out of my intellectual and wholly factic origin.... To this facticity

¹³See Bernhard Casper, “Martin Heidegger und die Theologische Fakultät Freiburg 1909-1923,” in Kirche am Oberrhein. Festschrift für Wolfgang Müller, eds. R. Bäumer, K. Suso Frank, H. Ott, Freiburger Diözesan Archiv 100 (1980): 541. I have adopted John D. Caputo’s translation in his Heidegger and Aquinas, 56f. Theodore Kisiel calls attention to the ambiguity of “diese” in brackets and tends to interpret it as being in plural, rather than in the singular, by offering as translation “these” rather than “the latter” (The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time, pp. 15, 19, 69). Franco Volpi translates the word in the singular, as “quest’ultima” (Heidegger e Aristotele [Padova: Daphne, 1984], 70).
This document seems, at first sight, to fully contradict the former. Quite unambiguously, Heidegger here seems to decline the name of "philosopher" and to return to and embrace theology again. The main point of the letter can be construed as saying that, in the last analysis, he is a theologian rather than a philosopher. Did Heidegger retract his commitment to philosophy, pronounced two and a half years earlier, and did he assume his old confessional ties? Of course, this question cannot be answered in the affirmative, any more than can the one emerging from his previous letter with regard to whether his option for philosophy implies a definite break with, or abandonment of, theology or Christianity. At a closer look, in the letter to Löwith we find a strong statement and a weak one; the former displays disengagement from philosophy, the latter suggests a weak dedication or adherence to theology, and the two statements are in obvious connection. In other words, while Heidegger unequivocally denies being a philosopher, he ambiguously commits (or re-commits) himself to theology again. While his self-identification with his being a theologian is not unqualified—it is, any case, specific, problematic—his relation to philosophy is, by contrast, quite straightforward and clear, namely, simply negative. Whether I am a theologian, he seems to suggest, is unsure, or at least it holds only in a specific sense; it is quite certain, however, that I am not a philosopher. 15

It is worth noting, by way of an excursus, that quite in keeping with what he writes in the letter to Löwith is his well-known autobiographical remark from the fifties, according to which without his theological origins he would never have come onto the path of thought (that is, here, philosophy) (US 96/10). The past remains, however, forever future, he adds there, and this allows for the interpretation that Heidegger may consider it possible to return to theology one day, namely, and in terms of his thoughts in the 50's, that he will begin speaking about God as soon as the present age, an age which he conceives of in terms of an age of


15 See p. 224 for text on this footnote.
scarcity, one of the *entflohenen Götter* (GA 4: 47; GA 45: 90), is over. Another possible way of interpreting this remark is that he is now, in the fifties, already a theologian, precisely by speaking about the absence of Gods. For, obviously, he who speaks about the absence of Gods, does speak of God, does have a notion of Him. To perceive the absence of God, while in the world there is no emptiness and indeed everything is filled in by objects of the most different sorts, presupposes a theological eye or susceptibility. To begin speaking of God does not necessarily mean beginning to speak about Him as soon as He is there, as soon as He is present, but may very well be taken to mean beginning to speak about Him by preparing for his presence and thereby outlining His (as yet empty) place, the place He will fill in as soon as He comes. For, lacking such a place, He would have, as it were, nowhere to arrive.

It will be of some use to mention briefly several major interpretations of these two letters. Gadamer interprets Heidegger as striving to get rid of the dominant theology of the day, in order precisely to be a Christian, or as committing himself, over against the arrogance of the theologians, to the real task of theology. Theodore Kisiel regards the relevant passage in the letter to Löwith as indicating that Heidegger, on the one hand, continues to consider himself to be a Christian. He claims, however, to be not simply a theologian, but a theo-logian, that is, a researcher of the *logos* of theology according to a specific scientific mode, one that transcends the traditional norms provided by philosophy, or philosophy of science. Faith is not doctrine, but life, the lived fact, God's birth in the soul, says Kisiel quoting Paul Natorp in a book written during the war. This is a statement in obvious harmony with,

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16 Gadamer makes a similar point with regard to Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche as a seeker of God; see his "Die religiöse Dimension," in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, 318.

17 In my paper "Heidegger's Postwar Turn: The Emergence of the Hermeneutic Viewpoint of His Philosophy and the Idea of 'Destrucktion' on the Way to Being and Time" (forthcoming in *Selected Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy*) I have attempted to show that the young Heidegger's centering of philosophy around the phenomenological-hermeneutic nucleus of factual life-experience, together with the undertaking of destruction, may be interpreted as being in service of helping a new age to be born, pointing thereby to the theme of the other beginning ("der andere Anfang") which emerges in the 30s. In particular, I argue that it is the overcoming of this age, in the service of which, and for the sake of which, Heidegger apparently understands his philosophy, or his becoming a philosopher, and that thereby we have, as it were, a sense of his ceasing to be a philosopher.


19 T. Kisiel, "War der frühe Heidegger tatsächlich ein 'christlicher Theologe'?", 60.
and able to shed light upon, Heidegger's subsequent conception of faith or religion.20

Max Müller points out that Heidegger regards Catholicism as a system, one that is erected upon the ground of an old metaphysics. This old metaphysics is the Scholastic one which, while originating from Aristotle, recasts Aristotle according to the system of Christian dogmatics. The latter, in its turn, has been articulated in a reciprocal intertwining with that metaphysics. For Heidegger, however, in contrast to the conception that the Church had then, Christianity is never a system, but rather a history, that is, the history of God with men, and of man with God, a history that requires historical interpretation. This interpretation of Christianity should be accompanied by the event of a new metaphysics of history. At the time, it is an open question for Heidegger how to conceive the relation of the new religiosity and the new metaphysics.21

This interpretation lets us see that Heidegger's detachment from "the system of Catholicism" and his concurrent option for philosophy does not in the least imply turning away from Christianity as such; indeed, his becoming a philosopher is very much compatible with it. In the given context the "system of Catholicism" means the Aristotelian-Scholastic philosophical system which, for Catholicism, is destined to articulate and explicate the conceptual interpretation of Christian faith. To say that the "system of Catholicism" has become "problematic and unacceptable" is, against this background, to say that the theological-philosophical foundation which underlies faith—the groundwork upon which faith rests—has become obsolete and petrified, requiring, as it does, being renewed and refreshed. To fulfil this task is in no way contrary to Christian faith; on this view, the choice for philosophy does not imply detachment from Christianity. In a sense, the contrary is true.

From this perspective, then, the crucial message of Heidegger's letter to Krebs—namely his opting for philosophy, his having an "an inner call" to it—need not be seen to be in conflict with the basic claim contained in his letter to Löwith, namely, that, rather than a philosopher, he is a "Christian theologian." Against the conceptual background just outlined, the two may be in perfect harmony. Their logical consequence, or extension, as it were, is the concise observation we find in Being and Time that "[t]heology is seeking a more primordial interpretation of

20Ibid., 72.
man's Being towards God, prescribed by the meaning of faith itself and remaining within it," and, in particular, that theology

is slowly beginning to understand once more Luther's insight, that the 'foundation' on which its system of dogma rests has not arisen from an inquiry in which faith is primary, and that conceptually this 'foundation' not only is inadequate for the problematic of theology, but conceals and distorts it. (SZ 10/30; see also GA 20: 6/4.)

It is wholly in line with this approach (and it is a somewhat more detailed clarification of it) when in his lecture "Phenomenology and Theology," held in the same year of the publication of Being and Time, Heidegger interprets theology as the "science of faith," where faith is conceived of in terms of a specific way of being of Dasein (52) encompassing, as it were, the whole domain, or horizon, within which alone, the specific "objects" of faith, for example, God, can appear. Faith is thus prior to God, and it would be a serious mistake or a vulgarization to define theology, naively, as the "science of God," or the "speculative knowledge of God" (59), wherein God would be an object of the respective science in the same way as the animals are the objects of zoology (59). Theology originates from faith (55), has its roots in faith, and, in general, makes sense only for faith (61), i.e., the believer. Faith anticipates and founds theology (60f). The sufficient motives of theology, as well as its justification, may lie only in faith itself (54, 55), and they lie in faith's attempt at a conceptual interpretation of itself ("begriffliche Auslegung" [54], "begriffliche Selbstinterpretation der gläubigen Existenz" [56]). The believing comportment (Gläubigkeit) can never originate from theology, but only through faith (Glaube) itself (56). Now, the task of theology is to find a conceptuality adequate to faith (60), the believing comportment and existence, and to contribute to developing and strengthening this attitude (55, 61). The better the conceptuality of theology, the more it develops from itself, that is, the less it borrows from philosophy (60, 58; see 69). For Heidegger, writes Gethmann-

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22 See GA 9: 55. The following numbers in parentheses in the body of the text refer to this edition (GA 9: 45-77).
23 Now we can see the precise way in which Heidegger puts the traditional conception regarding the relation of theology and philosophy into question. Incidentally, Heidegger begins the lecture by launching an overall attack against what he calls the "vulgar conception of the relation between theology and philosophy," which rests on the distinction between faith and knowledge, revelation and reason (GA 9: 47, 49). These are traditional metaphysical distinctions which have become obsolete and require destructive treatment.
Siefert, "religion requires a way of treatment adequate to its logos, a theology whose fundamental concepts are those of the historical understanding."  

Theological knowledge must arise from faith and return to it, Heidegger says. Thereby we should realize that in this definition of theology he employs not only a strategy similar to what he does when defining philosophy in *Being and Time*, but he uses approximately the same terms ("Philosophie ist universale phänomenologische Ontologie, ausgehend von der Hermeneutik des Daseins, die ... das Ende des Leitfadens dort festgemacht hat, woraus es entspringt und wohin es zurückschlägt" [SZ 38]; 26 "Alle theologische Erkenntnis ist ... auf den Glauben selbst gegründet, sie entspringt aus ihm und springt in ihn zurück" [GA 9: 61]). ... woraus es entspringt und wohin es zurückschlägt" and "entspringt aus ihm und springt in ihn zurück" show obvious parallels both conceptually and with regard to the matter itself. (What "faith" corresponds to on the side of philosophy remains however implicit; presumably, it is "existence" or, perhaps, the "pre-ontological understanding of Being" that characterizes it.) Both are ways of being of Dasein, and both move in a hermeneutic circle. 26 I take this parallel to be an illustration of my thesis that Heidegger's understanding of philosophy is permeated by, and emerges as a radicalization of, theological motives. 27 I could also say that philosophy's self-interpretation that Heidegger provides relies for its emergence on the self-interpretation of theological comportment as a model. Thereby Heidegger, as it were, transposes the self-interpretation of the theological comportment 

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24 A. Gethmann-Siefert, *Das Verhältnis von Philosophie und Theologie im Denken Martin Heideggers*, 36.
26 There is a passage in Fritz Kaufmann's *Nachschrift* of Heidegger's lecture course on the phenomenology of religion which defines philosophy in quite similar terms: "Das Philosophieren entspringt aus der faktischen Lebenserfahrung und springt—allerdings nach einer wesentlichen Umkehr—in sie zurück."
26 Heidegger's attempt, on the other hand, to describe theology in terms of an ontic science which, as such, is nearer to chemistry or mathematics than to philosophy (claimed to be the science of Being) does not seem convincing to me (a similar point is made in GA 24: 28); it can be questioned on purely Heideggerian grounds developed in the same lecture (see a similar objection in Gadamer, "Die religiöse Dimension," in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, 316).
27 This self-interpretation of philosophy is of course anticipated in some crucial aspects in the early Freiburg lecture courses. I will come to treat shortly Heidegger's postwar redefinition of philosophy, on the basis of GA 61 and 63, later in the text.
onto the level of philosophy in a specifically modified and formalized form.  

From what has been said thus far by way of interpretation of the two letters and of some related texts, we may say that Heidegger is not satisfied with the science of faith, that is, theology. Indeed, he thinks that the way Scholastic theology conceptualizes faith, or what it offers as the science of faith, not only is not able adequately to convey or communicate the lived experience had in faith, but, rather, it suppresses, falsifies and distorts it. Theology and religion are moving, as it were, in different directions. We find then in Heidegger’s œuvre such extreme formulations, for example, “Where theology emerges, God has always already begun to escape.”

When Heidegger published his lecture “Phenomenology and Theology” in 1969-70, in the “Foreword” he formulated his hope that his paper might occasion people to re-think the christianness of Christianity and of its theology. He recalled at the same time a work by Nietzsche’s friend, Franz Overbeck, published about one hundred years before with the title Über die Christlichkeit unserer heutigen Theologie—in which Overbeck “claimed that the world-negating expectation of the end is the fundamental character of primitive Christianity.”

It was Overbeck who put the christianness of Christian theology into question. Kisiel points out that Heidegger noted the twentieth anniversary of Overbeck’s death in 1925. Since the discussion related to the self-understanding of theology was conditioned to a great extent by the perspective of Overbeck’s book at the time, and since one of the important mediations through which Heidegger had admittedly gained access to the problematic concerning the self-interpretation of theology was

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28 Revelation is, Heidegger says, not just a matter of delivering or collecting positive knowledge about real occurrences, past or future, but it is a matter of participation, that is, taking part, in the content of what the revelation is about. In this participation, that is, faith, Dasein gets placed in front of God, and his existence, affected by the revelation, becomes aware of itself, reveals itself to itself, in a state of forgottenness of God (“Gottvergessenheit” [GA 9: 53]). This point is of utmost importance, for it shows a specifically Christian notion of “a-theism.”

29 GA 52: 133. It was Heidegger’s “old question to Christian theologians,” writes Gadamer, “whether there could be a more adequate self-understanding for Christians than the one offered by contemporary theology.” (“Die religiöse Dimension,” in Gesammelte Werke, vol. 3, 313.)

30 GA 9: 45f. On this point, see O. Pöggeler, Neue Wege mit Heidegger (Freiburg/München: Alber, 1992), 482; see also ibid., pp. 26, 32, 111.

31 “War der frühe Heidegger tatsächlich ein ‘christlicher Theologe’?” 75.
Overbeck’s work, it will be appropriate to investigate those thoughts of Overbeck that are pertinent from our present point of view.

The very title of Overbeck’s work is provocative in itself, for it makes an explicit problem with respect to the relation of two things whose fundamental link seems to be self-evident. The question of whether theology, which supposedly has to do with the very substance of religion, namely, faith, is compatible with faith and religion seems to be absurd on its face. For we might naively tend to think that theology is nothing other than the conceptualization of faith: systematizing it, summing up, articulating, elucidating, elaborating faith, in a word, giving it a scientific shape. The question concerning the christianness of Christian theology is admittedly shocking; it would have been equally shocking if, in the past decades of “real socialism” in the Eastern part of Europe, somebody had raised the question of whether the philosophy of Marxism, that is, dialectical materialism, was marxist. The issue turns obviously on what precisely we regard (pre-ontologically, as it were) to be the essence of the one or the other. If we consider the essence of Marxism to consist in Dialectical Materialism, that is, a given doctrine, teaching, then obviously the question of whether Dialectical Materialism is marxist is unintelligible and meaningless. If, by contrast, we assume the essence of Marxism lies in bringing about, say, a classless society, that is, a certain state of the world, a practical task to be realized, then it may still be the case that it will be hard to answer the question, that it will lead to aporias. For it may not be at all self-evident how the two things (the classless society and Dialectical Materialism) are related to each other. The difficulty is, nevertheless, not one in principle. As far as christianity is concerned, we may likewise assume that its essence lies in a set of doctrines or dogmas, and then, the question of the christianness of theology, as the question of the christianness of the essence of Christianity, is similarly absurd and without meaning. If we identify the essence of Christianity with some event however (and classless society is also some event), then the question at least becomes possible, that is, its possibility is not precluded at the very beginning.

In order to make his main thesis plausible about the fundamental disharmony of religion and theology, or the eminently irreligious character of every theology,32 Overbeck argues that there was no expectation in primitive Christianity of the creation of a theology, any more

than of any other worldly or secular matter. Indeed, Christianity made its appearance in the world precisely by announcing its imminent end.\textsuperscript{33} "For the undisturbed observation it is sufficiently clear," writes Overbeck

that Christianity equipped itself with a theology only when it wanted to make itself possible in a world which it, as a matter of fact, rejected. This thesis would be true even if we were to derive theology from the religious interests proper to Christianity ..., if, for example, we were to say that Christianity had had to furnish itself with a theology in order to protect itself against distortion by looking back at its origins and keeping its original appearance perpetually pure in memory. Even on such an assumption, theology would have been born from out of a weakness of Christianity, inseparable from its presence in the world. But of course, such a derivation would be altogether false. For, at the very beginnings of theology, that is, in the oldest Christian Alexandrianism we see as clearly as possible that theology directed its look absolutely somewhere else—that Christianity, with its own theology, wanted to offer itself also to the wise men of the world and wanted to be noticed by them. Looked at in such a way, theology is nothing else than part of the secularization of Christianity—some luxury which Christianity could afford, but which, as all luxury, is not indispensable.\textsuperscript{34}

Overbeck's main thesis against theology is based on the consideration that, insofar as theology brings faith into contact with knowledge, it mixes religious interest with other interests that are alien to it.\textsuperscript{35} Heidegger, however, can hardly have shared this view in such an excessive form.\textsuperscript{36} Indeed, his endeavor to search for the specific logos of

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 33f.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{36} For Overbeck the distinction faith/knowledge is still meaningful, and he draws on and operates with it in his attack on theology, while for Heidegger this distinction belongs to what he calls the "vulgar" conception of the relation of theology and philosophy. It is for this reason that Overbeck is a "sceptic"—or an "irrationalist," a "relativist"—whereas Heidegger precisely makes an attempt to undermine the bases of all these (metaphysical) distinctions, and brings to bear his destructive criticism upon them. In other words, concepts such as, "reason," "knowledge," etc., are for Heidegger far from being self-evident and require destruction back to their origins, whereas all those (including Overbeck) who sceptically reject them, and adopt their positon by that very
theology is not reasonable unless one assumes that what we have to do with here (in our search for the proper *logos*, that is, conceptuality, of theology) is an interest not at all alien to the religious one. This endeavor may be seen to be very much compatible, say, with Anselm’s principle of "*fides quaerens intellectum*"—albeit a bit hermeneuticized by Heidegger—and then, eventually, put to use for philosophy’s (rather than theology’s) self-understanding and self-enactment. Still, Oberbeck’s perspective and questioning horizon must have exerted a considerable impact upon him by questioning the relationship between religion, theology, and philosophy. It may have helped him wake up, so to speak, from his dogmatic sleep by making him question the assumptions of his *habilitation* dissertation, where philosophy’s contributing to furthering and enriching the Christian-Catholic outlook had plainly been taken for granted. Heidegger’s attention is now directed towards the conceptual foundations of theology and of its relation to religion and philosophy. The discrepancy that, as a result, he comes to perceive between theology (conceptual clarification, theoretical speech) and religion (immediate faith, the believing attitude) is in principle no different from the asymmetry or incongruity he comes to exhibit in the postwar lecture courses between philosophy (theory, theoretical comportment, theoretical conceptuality) and life, that is, lived experience, Erlebnis (with the everyday language it speaks). The radical postwar reflections related to the foundations of religion, theology, and philoso-

rejection, thereby tacitly make use of their meaning and meaningfulness. See also note above.

37 Given that "the tendency towards interpretation ... belongs to life’s own basic movements" (PLA 246/367), and, that hermeneutics, in the Heideggerian sense, is nothing else but the "self-interpretation of facticity" (GA 63: 14f: facticity is characterized by the fact that it possesses its being as something both capable of, and requiring, being interpreted, that is, by the fact that it belongs to its being to be somehow in interpretedness [ibid., 15]), faith and knowledge, namely, factic human existence and interpretation, cannot in principle be separated from each other. Rather it is the other way round: facticity’s ownmost interest must be seen to point towards, and lie essentially in, its own self-interpretation. Compare this to Anselm’s theological program, who tells us in the preface to his *Proslogion* that its title should really have sounded "*fides quaerens intellectum*." Karl Barth specifically makes the point that Anselm’s real concern was theology understood as *intellectus fidei*, and that, far from being something alien to faith, *intelligere* was indeed an exigency of faith itself, a spontaneous desire inherent in it (see K. Barth, *Fides quaerens intellectum. Anselms Beweis der Existenz Gottes im Zusammenhang seines theologischen Programms* [Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1931], part I, ch. 1). - This point is related to my above claim that the understanding of philosophy Heidegger is working out right after the war is permeated by theological motives, or emerges as a radicalization of a particular self-understanding of theology and its task (i.e., here, of Anselm’s sort).
phy, as well as to their respective self-interpretations and reciprocal relations, which were to transform Heidegger into an original thinker, testify thereby to a considerable extent to assimilating Overbeck’s influence, to taking up his challenge, and attempting to give an answer to it. 38

2.

With this background in mind, I will, first, provide a somewhat more technical outline of Heidegger’s postwar turn and his ensuing new understanding of philosophy. In a second step, I will enlarge this outline by showing some of the underlying theological or religious motivation of Heidegger’s new understanding of philosophy. Thirdly, I will take up the discussion of Heidegger’s claims about philosophy’s atheism.

When Heidegger set out on his own after the war, he soon came to undertake an overall confrontation and re-appropriation of the whole domain of philosophy. He tried to carry out a comprehensive confrontation with the philosophical tradition extending from the contemporary tendencies back to the Greeks, and, inseparably from it, that with which philosophy has been concerned, its peculiar (subject) matter, which he came variously to identify in terms like “life,” “factic life,” or “factic life experience.” This is Heidegger’s first and most radical turn—a passage from the status of a talented disciple, or follower of certain philosophical schools of the day, to that of an autonomous thinker, having an outlook and a conceptuality distinctly his own. 39 The re-thinking included also the traditional articulation of the philosophical disciplines (for example, logics, ethics, aesthetics, etc.) 40—small wonder, then, that he came to reflect on the very foundations and disciplinary delimitation of theology too. The transformation of his philosophical outlook is all-encompassing; it involves his entire understanding of, and attitude to, philosophy.

38 See p. 225 for text on this footnote.
40 See GA 58: 18, 21; GA 59: 172; GA 21: 1ff. The same point emerges in the seinsgeschichtlich perspective to the effect that the philosophical disciplines as such arise only in the hellenistic period, i.e., subsequent to the decline from the level attained by the original Greek thinkers (see GA 3: 8f.; GA 29/30: 66f.; GA 9: 316, 354).
Indeed, more than a transformation, this represents an autonomous appropriation of philosophy for the first time, one whereby Heidegger becomes a self-conscious philosopher.

His repeated attempts to elaborate a new access to the subject matter of philosophy, that is, life, yield the point of emergence for the hermeneutic perspective of his philosophy leading up to the elaboration of his early hermeneutics of facticity. The emergence and gradual unfolding of this positive aspect is paralleled and supplemented by the simultaneous rise of a historical or negative (or critical) aspect, governed by the endeavor of confronting and re-appropriating the whole philosophical tradition, an endeavor captured by the idea of “destruction.”

Heidegger takes up Husserl’s password “Back to the things themselves” and soon turns it against Husserl. He does so by interpreting the subject matter of philosophy, that is, the “thing itself,” in terms of life rather than transcendental consciousness. His new password sounds: “Back to the origins, back to life itself!” In one sense, the origin is, so to speak, synchronous; it indicates the fundamental motivational basis out of which life springs and which governs its coming to pass, its being enacted. In another sense, the origin is historical, and requires going back to and re-appropriating the Greek beginnings of Western philosophy. Because the tradition stretching from the Greeks up to us has concealed—rather than retained or disclosed—the origin, the tradition must be deconstructed, in order precisely to make the access to the origin possible.\(^{41}\)

In the midst of this comprehensive effort—both systematic and historical—time and again Heidegger comes to reflect upon philosophy itself, re-examining its very concept and meaning. The transformation, or appropriation for the first time, of his philosophical perspective is accompanied by the transformation or re-orientation of his awareness of what philosophy is, by gaining a new, and indeed quite fresh, awareness of it.

Heidegger’s new concept of philosophy is hermeneutical, that is, situation-dependent and existence-centered, equally detached from

\(^{41}\) See GA 58: 203: “Das Ursprungsgebiet ... muß immer von Neuem erfaßt werden. Daher die immer neuen radikalen Tendenzen in der Philosophie im Laufe Ihrer Geschichte.” In Franz Joseph Brecht’s Nachschrift it sounds even more radically with regard to the “Ursprungsgebiet” of philosophy: “Das Schicksal der Philosophie! Tendenz in der Geschichte der Philosophie: immer neu anfangen, um es [das Ursprungsgebiet] zu erreichen.” Heidegger’s search for an adequate conceptuality for the description of factual life finds its expression in what he comes to call “formal indication,” which he takes to be the method proper of philosophy or phenomenology (see, for example, GA 9: 9f., 29; GA 58: 248; GA 61: 20, 32ff., 60, 66f., 113, 116, 134, 141, 175; GA 63: 85; GA 21: 410; GA 29/30: 425).
rationalism and irrationalism, absolutism and scepticism, relativism or historicism. This concept centers around questionability. Essential to it is, negatively, the rejection of all free-floating concepts and theories, universal truths and imposing constructions, and, positively, insistence on passionate devotion to the matter itself, on the adequate description of what shows itself—the latter being Heidegger's way of taking over, appropriating, and immediately radicalizing, Husserl's insistence on rigor (GA 58: 137, 231). "Pushed into absolute questionability, to have questionability by seeing it: that is what it means to seize philosophy," he claims in 1921-22. Philosophy "is not the saving coastline but the leap into the tossing boat, where everything hangs upon getting hold of the sail line and looking to the wind ... Solid ground lies in seizing questionability." Philosophy is essentially philosophy (as well as critique) of one given age; it is an understanding appropriation-retrieval of its own subject matter, life, no less than of its past (for both itself and its subject matter, life, are intimately historical, they are their own past), accompanying life as closely to its center or origin as possible. It is a re-enacting accomplishment of life, helping it to interpretively illuminate, that is, appropriate and re-appropriate, itself.

Philosophy becomes a hermeneutics that has assumed an ontological dimension by becoming, for Heidegger, "the self-interpretation of factic-
ity" (GA 63: 14). In Heidegger's postwar turn a new, hermeneutic approach to, and a corresponding conceptual elaboration of, the subject matter of philosophy, life or facticity, becomes integrated with the historical-critical aspect of destruction. Re-orienting philosophy toward life or facticity means obviously looking for the right conceptual tools able to seize it. One basic insight of Heidegger's is that the descriptions that contemporary philosophy provides of everyday life, the environing world, etc., stem from, and are rooted in, theoretical comportment and conceptuality. They fail to do justice to factual life—its comportment and the language it speaks—precisely insofar as the theoretical attitude is a derivative mode of factual life. The access to this remains herme­neutical, preceded and indeed made possible by, a pre-understanding we always already have of it.

Studying the rich material that has recently become available about the young Heidegger's Denkweg, we can detect that Heidegger's postwar philosophical reorientation, namely, his new hermeneutic approach to life or facticity, has largely been motivated by his on-going concern with the religious problematic. His orienting philosophy toward a pre-theoretical experience (one, that provides the foundations for his criticism of Husserl's phenomenology and indeed the whole epistemology-ori­ented philosophy of the day) is inspired to a great extent by his religious interests—more precisely, by a shift in his religious interest from Neo-Scholatic theology to mysticism, ever so close to inner life and the immediate, lived (religious) experience of the individual. The basic disposition, or comportment, of his early phenomenology of life, elabo­rated as an alternative to Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, is identified, as we learn now, in terms of a religiously tuned "humilitas animi" (GA 58: 23), its aim being an intensification and deepening of inner life. The fundamental incentive, proper to a genuinely religious soul, which finds its expression in Augustine's "inquietum cor nostrum," (GA 58: 62; see GA 61: 174) is taken over by Heidegger as the animating source of philosophy. Philosophy's task is, accordingly, to do justice to such unrest or disquietude (GA 59: 171, 174), rather than ambiguously and artificially to suppress it in and through a theoretical attitude—a tendency also inherent in life, namely in life's flight from itself. The

ibid., 139, 162, 254, 262; see further GA 56/57: 110, 117.

47 See on this point Kisiel, The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time, 113.

48 If life is seen as having a tendency to secure itself over against the fundamental unrest or disquiet characteristic of life (for example, GA 58: 62f., 205; GA 61: 93, 120), philosophy's task is all the more to restore this fundamental unrest in its own right. Heidegger calls the "notion of absolute truth" "ein einschlafenerdes Opiat" (GA 61: 164); and he claims that "to meditate about universal validity is to misunderstand the fundamental meaning of facticity" (GA 61: 87).
religious motivation is plausible also in the fact that philosophy, for Heidegger, is rooted in, and starts from, a *Grundstimmung* (GA 29/30: 10; GA 45: 1ff.; 129; GA 65: 45ff.). In particular, we see that a key notion of the early lecture courses, that of the “Selbstwelt”—which literally will disappear in *Being and Time* (for a self-critique in regard to this term, see GA 20: 333/242), but in the form of “Jemeinigkeit,” namely, in the whole problematic of autenthicity, will very much continue to be present—emerges from an explicitly religious problematic (GA 58: 58ff.). Finally, it is interesting to see that Heidegger’s questioning of the traditional notion of truth as truth of knowledge and the assertion—and his ensuing effort to open up a dimension of truth lying behind the knowing dimension, one in terms of the truth of life and Dasein—may have had religious sources is something that we have could at best conjecture thus far. Now we have evidence, however, that this inquiry of Heidegger’s did really spring from a religious background, deriving from Augustine and the New Testament (see GA 17: 120, 125, 128; see then the “truth of existence” in SZ 221/264, 297/343, 307/355; SZ 213ff./257ff.; and see GA 17: 98: the understanding of truth as validity is inadequate for historical knowledge and even more so for religious “truth”).

What I have attempted to show above by way of interpreting some biographical documents (Heidegger’s two letters) becomes now, as can be seen, accessible in, and disclosed by, the innermost thematic of Heidegger’s early lecture courses. That innermost thematic is the strict connection, or merging together, of philosophy, theology and religion.

We should realize that this new understanding of philosophy (variously motivated by religious impulses), which Heidegger has come to adopt and elaborate in the postwar years, has at times tended to identify itself in terms of atheism. It is well known, that right after World War II Sartre claimed Heidegger to belong in the “atheistic” wing of “existentialists,” and that Heidegger wasted no time in refuting this classification of his thought in his letter on humanism. Indeed, his early position—the one developed in *Being and Time*—can hardly be said to have anything to do with atheism in any usual sense of the term. Still,
among the recently published early lecture courses and manuscripts the
designation of "atheism," "atheistic" for his own thought—namely, for
the characterization of the specific character or comportment of philoso­
phy as such—crops up several times, and this occasions us to look into
the matter more closely.

More specifically, Heidegger's considerations on philosophy's athe­
ism are embedded in his postwar efforts to come to a new fundamental
self-understanding of philosophy. It is significant that for philosophy's
self-characterization Heidegger quite frequently employs the concept of
atheism, and this calls for an examination.

From what has been said about Heidegger's new concept of philoso­
phy it is clear that philosophy thus characterized requires a specific
Einstellung, comportment. It is in distancing itself from the theoretical,
knowing attitude, traditionally held to be the philosophical attitude
proper, that philosophy, for Heidegger comes to grasp itself. The ques­
tioning attitude, seen by Heidegger as the fundamental philosophical
comportment, has also a specific relation to religion. In an important
reflection on this issue from 1921/22, he says:

Questionability is not religious, but rather it may really lead
into a situation of religious decision for the first time. I do
not behave religiously in philosophizing, even if I as a phi­
losopher can be a religious man. "But here is the art": to
philosophize and thereby to be genuinely religious, that is, to
take up factically its worldly, historical task in philosophiz­
ing, in action, and a world of action, not in religious ideology
and fantasy.

Philosophy, in its radical questionability—a questionability
depending upon itself alone—must be in principle a-theistic.
In virtue of its fundamental tendency, philosophy may not
have the audacity/daring [of claiming] to possess God and to
be able to define Him. The more radical philosophy is, the
more decisively it is an "away" from Him, that is to say,

atheistic." Indeed, Being and Time is "a work thoroughly interwoven with
theological questions"; it is "a twofold retrieval, of Aristotle on the one hand and
of New Testament life on the other." (John D. Caputo, "Heidegger's God and the
Lord of History," The New Scholasticism 57 [Autumn 1983]: 444; idem,
"Heidegger and Theology," in The Companion to Heidegger, ed. Ch. Guignon
[Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 273f.). Karl Lehmann argues,
similarly, that Heidegger "formalizes [the] experience of life had in primitive
christianity" (K. Lehmann, "Christliche Geschichtserfahrung und ontologische
Frage beim jungen Heidegger," in Heidegger: Perspektiven zur Deutung seines
Werkes, 145).
precisely in radically carrying out the "away," it is a specifically difficult [being] "with" Him.\textsuperscript{52}

In this passage, which would be worth analyzing sentence by sentence, let me focus on the claim about a-theism. The hyphenated spelling immediately makes us attentive to the fact that it is intended in a specific sense. It parallels and anticipates the later Heidegger's "Denken" in terms of "god-less thinking" which by abandoning the usual metaphysical concepts of God is claimed to be "perhaps closer to the divine God" (ID 71/141), in that it makes itself free for it.\textsuperscript{53} A-theism, in like manner, is not to be understood as the counterpart or adversary, of, for example, theism (as negation of the existence of God), but rather, as that which precedes this very distinction, as a questionability that, as Heidegger explicitly suggests here, "may really lead into a situation of religious decision for the first time" (my italics). This view of Heidegger's was to be held through many decades: philosophy, as he understood it, be it fundamental ontology, namely, existential analytic, or just "thinking," lies prior to the domain to be occupied (or the decisions to be taken) by religion or theology, a position exemplified all along, for example, in \textit{Being and Time}, "Phenomenology and Theology," and the letter on humanism.\textsuperscript{54}

We are then not to overlook the fact that philosophy should, for Heidegger, assume a-theistic attitude precisely in principle, that is, not in fact, or, as an express standpoint.\textsuperscript{55} Indeed, what it comes down to is that philosophy should simply go about its business without resorting

\textsuperscript{52}GA 61: 197. I have partly adopted John D. Caputo's translation in his "Heidegger and Theology" (The Companion to Heidegger), 278.

\textsuperscript{53}This claim must be seen against the background of the young Heidegger's Overbeckian objections to theology—namely, that what theology misses is nothing less than precisely (genuine) religiosity.

\textsuperscript{54}See GA 9: 63, 338f., 351f. (esp. p. 352: "Theistisch kann es [das Denken] so wenig sein wie atheistisch"). Heidegger explicitly claims in \textit{Being and Time} for example, that his analysis of death leaves all religious or theological assumptions about "whether 'after death' still another Being is possible, ... or whether Dasein 'lives on' or even 'outlasts itself' and is 'immortal'" deliberately undecided. (SZ 247f./292)

\textsuperscript{55}See also GA 61: 196: "Prinzipieller Atheismus, prinzipielle Auseinandersetzung," where at a closer look the comma has not so much the function of listing as the value of "i.e.: "prinzipielle Auseinandersetzung" is thus an explication for "prinzipieller Atheismus," and belongs to the dimension of "questionability," by being the other side of it. Indeed, it is precisely "questionability" that requires "Auseinandersetzung." It is the questionability of things that makes one face and confront them. Without confrontation of, i.e., inquiries into, the things themselves, or the way the philosophical tradition has come to confront them, there is no philosophy, any more than there is without "questionability."
to auxiliary hypotheses related to God (as a kind of emergency exit) whenever it gets into trouble, embarrassment, perplexity, by getting no further in its own questions through conceptual means. Claims to the effect that “God willed it,” “God created it that way,” etc., have indeed not only poor explanatory power, but—still worse—what they achieve is to block or thwart questioning in a prior and authoritarian way. If one faces a puzzle or a mystery, or an enigma, such responses are no more than pseudo-answers. Heidegger’s position with regard to the mystery is, by contrast, wholly phenomenological, resting on the assumption that the inconceivability itself should also be experienced, so to speak head-on or face-to-face, rather than dogmatically stated.  

Similarly, Heidegger’s claim in his lecture on the concept of time that “the philosopher does not believe” (BZ 6/1) does not in the least imply that the philosopher is someone who denies the existence of God, or is sure of His non-existence. What it suggests is, rather, that if the philosopher ever wants to embark on his questioning enterprise (his distinct privilege or fate) he must first give up (must previously have given up) the tacit self-confidence of those, including theologians, who claim to have definite answers to all questions beforehand, that is, before having experienced the things themselves. This tacit self-confidence may also assume the form of a particularly negative assurance that, with regard to certain issues (for example, what has come to be known in terms of articles of faith, enigmas, or mysteries), human reason can forever and in principle attain no answer, and that it may therefore not even venture to seek, or be on the lookout for them (this is the tacit self-confidence of dogmatic skepticism).  

To come back to the interpretation of our previous text, the “audacity” of the claim “to possess God and to be able to define Him” would amount

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66 Or, incidentally, “stories” about beings in terms of “warfare and love in which beings come to be from other beings and pass away into them”—which is what provides the starting situation of Being and Time, in the sense that the prior break with such “story-tellers” is a presupposition necessary for being admitted to philosophy and its central Being-question. See on this point John Sallis, “Where Does Being and Time begin?” in idem, Delimitations, Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 98-118, esp., 99ff.  
67 See GA 9: 62; SA 65; 70. The claim that inconceivability should not remain dumb, or inarticulate, will then be “concretized” in Heidegger’s own practice of philosophizing, namely, in his descriptions of the self-withdrawal of Being—descriptions provided indeed by the “highest efforts” of thinking, allowing for ignorance to take its rights for the first time (for example, to the effect that all we can say about “Ereignis” is, understandably, that is “ereignet” [SD 24]).  
68 Heidegger sharply opposed this kind of dogmatic or free-floating skepticism. In the paragraph preceding the one under analysis, he rejects purely
to giving up philosophy's "fundamental tendency," that is, questioning, in short, to giving up philosophy itself. This audacity would bring life's original unrest to a recess, to a self-conceited confidence of having found an intimacy with God—and, what presumably follows from it, an ensuing future life and eternal beatitude—a confidence that can no longer be shaken by earthly events, and that generates a certain arrogance in one's behavior with one's fellow men, or at least a good deal of insensitivity to their sufferings. "Possessing God" is, in this sense, forever prohibitive for philosophy, as long as it is to remain philosophy.

In an analogous, indeed even more powerful, passage taken from the 1922 "Introduction to Aristotle," Heidegger addresses philosophy's self-understanding in the course of a single conceptual crescendo that culminates in a formulation of philosophy's atheism, which is then followed by an important footnote, destined to further expound the precise sense of the term (PIA 246/367, 393). I will quote the relevant parts only from this long sentence.

First, if philosophy is not a contrived preoccupation with just any "generalities" whatsoever, and with arbitrarily posited principles ...; but is, rather, as questioning knowledge ..., simply the genuine, explicit actualization of the tendency towards interpretation which belongs to life's own basic movements ...; and, secondly, if philosophy intends to view and to grasp factical life in its decisive possibilities of Being; that is, if philosophy has decided radically and clearly on its own (without regard for any bustling-about with respect to world views) to deliver factical life over to itself on the basis

"theoretische Skepsis," i.e., "leere Skepsis, die nie anfängt, sondern nur redet" and which is inadequate for genuine questioning ("Paßt nicht für echtes Fragen!") (GA 61: 197). Skepsis in a genuine sense, by contrast, the one Heidegger has in mind as opposed to the purely theoretical one, is really an existential skepsis (see GA 61: 35), more similar to Kierkegaard's "despair," and indeed relying on Kierkegaard's distinction between "despair" and "doubt." Kierkegaard's point is that despair, in contrast to doubt, does not require special preliminary knowledge, education, or talent (all of these being beyond the power of the individual), and that the simplest man is capable of it. (See S. Kierkegaard, Entweder/Oder. Zweiter Teil [Düsseldorf: Diederichs Verlag 1957], 224, 226, 195: "Es ist in der neueren Philosophie überreichlich davon die Rede gewesen, daß alle Spekulation anhebt mit dem Zweifel". "Es ist Talent nötig zum Zweifeln [and talent is "eine Bedingung, die nicht in des Individuums eignen Macht steht"], aber es ist schlechterdings kein Talent nötig zum Verzweifeln" - "der geringste, schwächst begabte Mensch kann verzweifeln"). See also note above. On Heidegger's attitude to skepticism, see PIA 252/374; GA 9: 3; GA 58: 168; GA 61: 162ff.; GA 63: 63; GA 17: 99; SZ 229/271ff.; GA 21: 20ff.; GA 24: 316/221f.
of its very own factical possibilities; that is, if philosophy is fundamentally atheistic and if it understands this about itself; — then ....

Since the last "that is," preceding the adjective "atheistic," can aptly be read as standing for "in a word," or "briefly," or "in short," the term "atheistic" gathers into itself, as it were, all the previous characterizations and restrictions. Atheistic is then a philosophy, or philosophy as such, inasmuch as it concentrates on questioning and puts into work the hermeneutical-interpretive tendency always already inherent in facticity (points we have come across above too). Philosophy is further "atheistic" by delivering factical life over to itself, a point I will come back to below.

After deciphering backwards, as it were, what "atheistic" means in the given context, a not unimportant question still remains, namely,

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59 PIA 246/367. With some modifications I have adopted Michael Baur's translation. I have not quoted the sentence up to its end because, first, it is irrelevant for my present purposes, and second, because it is, as far as I can see, tautological, that is, the principal clause (which is no more quoted) contains no new information in addition to those pieces of information spread all over in the previous subordinate clauses. The claim that the sentence is tautological (or analytic), because the conclusion contains nothing more than that contained in the premises (the "if" clauses), is not meant to be a critical remark. This stylistic device is part of Heidegger's passionate rhetoric at the time. The attempt to translate this sentence in any acceptable way must be a incessant frustration, and even where I departed from Michael Baur's solutions I do not claim to have adequately coped with the task (for an interpretive and illuminating paraphrase of this one sentence, split up into five sentences, see Kisiel, The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time, 259). Compare Heidegger's rejection of philosophy as "Beschäftigung mit irgendwelchen 'Allgemeinheiten'," with the following passage in Being and Time: "One may, however, ask what purpose this question [sc. the Being-question] is supposed to serve. Does it simply remain—or is it at all—a mere matter for soaring speculation about the most general of generalities [allgemeinste Allgemeinheiten], or is it rather, of all questions, both the most basic and the most concrete?" (SZ 9/29; I have suppressed Heidegger's emphases and added mine).

60 "wenn ... Philosophie ... sich dafür entschieden hat, das faktische Leben von ihm selbst her ... auf sich selbst zu stellen, daß heißt wenn Philosophie grundsätzlich atheistisch ist ...." (My italics) Heidegger frequently employs the idiom auf sich selbst stellen to identify philosophy, and in several contexts this identification takes place precisely as a delimitation of philosophy against theology or religion. Let me quote some further occurrences (all italicizing is mine): "Philosophie als das freie Fragen des rein auf sich gestellten Daseins" ("Phänomenologie und Theologie," in GA 9: 65); "Philosophie muß in ihrer radikalen, sich auf sich selbst stellenden Fraglichkeit prinzipiell a-theistisch sein" (GA 61: 197); "Philosophie ist die im faktischen Leben selbst seiernde Weise des Erkennens, in der faktisches Dasein sich ... auf sich selbst stellt." (GA 63: 18) A slight stylistic variant is vor sich selbst stellen; see the following quote (which I will come to dwell on later in the text): "[Die] Feigheit vor dem Fragen
why the different characteristics listed previously are united under precisely this label. Apparently Heidegger himself perceives this difficulty, that is, that his choice of the word “atheistic” for the sense of philosophy described earlier in the sentence is somewhat unusual, and that may have induced him to attach a footnote here, in order to further clarify what he understands by atheism. After explaining that it does not mean some theory of materialism, he proceeds to make a yet further statement about what philosophy in principle is:

Every philosophy which understands itself in what it is must ...

That philosophy’s self-identification takes place in delimitation against religion, or in disengaging itself from religiosity, is not surprising: we have come across the same strategy before. What is definitely surprising and quite novel in this context, however, is that even after delimiting philosophy against, or detaching it from, religion, Heidegger still goes

verbrämt sich oft mit Religiosität. Letztliches, vor sich selbst gestelltes Fragen erscheint dieser Religiosität als Vermessenheit” (GA 17: 2). Later I will interpret this idiom as having Kantian overtones; see note below.

61 I have adopted Michael Baur’s translations with some modifications. “Zurückreißen zu” should, I think, be translated by a more violent term then the rather neutral or passive “retreat towards.” For the same idiom (Sich zu sich selbst zurückreißen), see also GA 63: 18: “Philosophie ist die im faktischen Leben selbst seiernde Weise des Erkennens, in der faktisches Dasein sich rücksichtslos zu sich selbst zurückreiβt und unnachsichtlich auf sich selbst stellt.” (My italics.) For the term “verführerisch,” see Being and Time 177/222: “Diese Beruhigung im uneigentlichen Sein verführt jedoch nicht zu Stillstand ...” (“this tranquillity in inauthentic Being does not seduce one into stagnation ...”). “Verführen,” “Verführung,” etc. is mostly translated by “seduce,” “seduction” (see SZ 52/77, 149/190, 302/349; for two exceptions, see ibid., pp. 115/151, 116/152: “lead astray”). As to the term “beredend,” I think that in addition to the (rather neutral) meaning “talk over/about” (adopted in the English translation of Being and Time throughout) also the one concerning “talk into/make believe/cajole into/imitate, etc.”, must be drawn upon here (in the sense of “pretending to be something by talking a lot about it as a replacement of just being it in a genuine way without wasting many words”). See also the famous letter to Löwith, Zur philosophischen Aktualität Heideggers, vol. 2, 31.
on viewing it in religious terms. In other words, after the delimitation is carried out, philosophy, as it were, casts a self-defining glance upon itself with the conceptuality provided by that which it detached itself from, that is, religiosity. What is further surprising and novel, is that this self-detachment is still interpreted as an "honest" way (or, rather, the only honest way) of facing God under the circumstances, that is, given the "possibility available to it as such," namely the human condition, human finiteness. If things are that way, then philosophy's self-detachment from religiosity remains still within the domain of religiosity ("before God"), as one peculiar kind of it (claimed to be the only honest one). It is only against the background of one given sort of religious attitude, that is, the "seductive sort of worrying, which merely talks about, or makes believe with religiosity," that philosophy assumes the label of atheism.

A show of hands against God is of course a sin or rebellion. One cannot rebel, however, against someone you think non-existent. The way philosophy is "away' from Him," we have read in the above passage, is exactly the way it is "with' Him." Admittedly, it is a specifically "difficult" way, a way conforming "to the possibility available to" a philosophy centering around facticity as such. The meaning of this rebellion may lie in an endeavor to reach Him, by making Him show Himself, in order to confirm one's faith in Him, to gain a new access to Him, one different from the "seductive sort of worrying." A show of hands is further not so much an action as a re-action, preceded by God's putting his creature to test. He who shows his hand against God has previously been touched by God's hand, having thereby been tossed into distress. The hermeneutic situation against the background of which philosophy emerges in terms of a radical questioning in the midst of the questionability of all things—"pushed into absolute questionability, to have questionability by seeing it: that is what it means to seize philosophy—is likewise one of distress, concern, and anxiety. The transcendental past, as it were, the Urgeschichte, of this situation is a preliminary loss of sense, a prior darkening of the sky of meaning, one which motivates and puts the project of overall re-appropriation and

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62 In the last sentence of the footnote (not fully cited), Heidegger objects to Neo-Kantian philosophy of religion for setting out without giving due weight to the "facticity of the human being."

63 A similar point is made in the letter to Krebs by saying "I have an inner call to philosophy and ... by answering it ... I ... justify my existence and work itself before God." (My emphasis; see note above.)

64 GA 61: 197, cited more fully under note above.

65 Whereby "solid ground," if there is any, "lies in seizing questionability." (GA 61: 37, quoted at note above.)
destruction into motion, and indeed makes it meaningful and intelligible for the first time.  

Heidegger's notion of philosophy's "atheism" is thus not only not atheistic in any usual sense of the term, but it is rather, conversely, inspired very much by a religious-theological motivation or attitude or comportment. The latter is labelled "atheistic" precisely by another, alternatively or differently religious attitude. It is, in other words, "atheistic" only if we tacitly orient religiosity toward one among many possible religious comportments, the one namely, for which questioning is impious, which prohibits questioning, for which radical questioning is audacity, presumptuousness. Of course, it is not uncommon that, having situated oneself within one religious attitude, one labels others as "atheistic." Surely, for this very reason, however, Heidegger's questioning comportment, which underlies his innermost conception of philosophy after the war, can hardly be stamped as atheistic. It is, rather, the other way round. As radical questioning—whereby we should not forget that questioning will later be interpreted as "the piety of thinking," that is, identified as another characteristically religious attitude—it is theologically motivated and may be interpreted as a kind of Anselmian *fides quarens intellectum*, namely, faith's (facticity's) attempt at self-understanding, self-clarification (see in particular now GA 59: 171f.). Heidegger's adoption of the term "atheistic" should, I think, be seen in the given context as a provocative assumption of the way one particular kind of religiosity views another one.

A further evidence of the fact that it is not so much religiosity as such, but rather one specific form of it—one specific religious comportment among many possible others—that Heidegger has in mind is supplied by the opening part of the lecture course 1923/24, which has recently

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66 The above considerations coincide to a considerable extent with some passages Theodore Kisiel expounded from the unpublished SS 1921 lecture course on Augustine and Neoplatonism. Kisiel reconstructs the passages which are relevant for my present discussion as saying the following: "we at first must move away from God ... When I 'become a question to myself', the distance from God increases. One must first lose God in order to find Him ... this is the most decisive—the performative—sense of sin." He then comments: "We are but one step short of what Heidegger in the following year will call the essential 'atheism' inherent in philosophical questioning." (Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, 207; see also ibid., 218).

67 Heidegger's later interpretation of Nietzsche may very well be brought to bear upon himself in this respect, namely, that Nietzsche's "atheism," his dictum that "God is dead," is not only not incompatible with his passionate seeking for God, but is indeed in strict connection to it. For Heidegger, Nietzsche was the last German thinker who passionately sought for God (SUR 13). On Nietzsche, religiosity, atheism, Christianity, and "Gottlosigkeit," see further GA 43: 191; GA 44: 69ff.; GA 5: 213ff.
become available. Heidegger makes explicit here that the “cowardice to put questions” (“Feigheit vor dem Fragen”), so alien to philosophy, often tends to justify itself, or hide itself, as “religiosity.” He then goes on to say: “Ultimate, self-confronting questioning [vor sich selbst gestelltes Fragen] appears to be audacity for this kind of religiosity.” “Vor sich selbst gestelltes Fragen,” like Heidegger’s other frequent idiom with regard to philosophy, namely, “auf sich selbst stellen,” indicates a certain coming of age, becoming adult, autonomy, and has thereby definitely Kantian overtones. The philosopher, sich auf sich selbst gestellt, delivering himself over to himself, wants to be on his own even in finding his way to God, unguided by the authorities.

In summary, we may say that the atheism Heidegger proclaims is only methodological, that is, it refers to, and urges the adoption of, a certain attitude or comportment, that of not taking over anything blindly from the tradition, from the authorities. It urges appropriating and reappropriating, in and by factual life-experience, the “objects” of philosophy, no less than what has been handed down by the tradition (extending thereby Kantian autonomy to a domain, that of history, that Kant, in his aufklärerisch inclination, tended to dismiss a priori from reason’s realm), having an autonomous relationship to the “things themselves.” Perfectly in line with this basic attitude is the way Heidegger comes to define phenomenology, namely, philosophy. This means “to grasp its objects in such a way that everything about them which is up for discussion must be treated by exhibiting it directly and demonstrating it directly.” Phenomenological method has for Heidegger pri-

68 See p. 227 for text on this footnote.
69 No wonder that Heidegger especially liked the following dictum of Schelling’s, “Selbst Gott muß der lassen, der sich in den Anfangspunkt der wahrhaft freien Philosophie stellen will.” SA 7; Schellings sämmtliche Werke, ed. K.F.A. Schelling, vol. XI, pp. 217f.) Schelling, who was to write thousands of pages on the philosophy of revelation in his Munich and Berlin period, was of course not an atheist, any more than Heidegger was. The disposition of Heidegger’s early hermeneutics of facticity could in a way be scarcely better characterized by anything than this passage of Schelling’s. Heidegger surely wanted to put himself into the “Anfangspunkt der wahrhaft freien Philosophie,” so his hermeneutics of facticity, with its radical questioning, was likewise also to give up everything, inclusive of God, and thus to become, in this specific sense, a-theistic.
marily a "sense of prohibition—the avoidance of characterizing anything without such demonstration."\(^70\)

Finally, let me refer to another characteristic passage where the designation of "atheism" for the Heideggerian sort of philosophy crops up. Heidegger says in 1925:

> As long as phenomenology understands itself, it will adhere to this [radical Heideggerian] course of investigation against any sort of prophetism within philosophy and against any inclination to provide guidelines for life [Lebensleitung]. Philosophical research is and remains atheism, which is why philosophy can allow itself 'the arrogance of thinking.' (GA 20: 110/30; my italics.)\(^71\)

In this passage, there is a double delimitation of Heidegger's radicalized interpretation of phenomenology, namely, philosophy: against prophetism, on the one hand, and "providing guidelines for life," on the other. The rejection of prophetism is in keeping with the prohibitive phenomenological maxim, referred to above, that is, following from "the avoidance of characterizing anything without ... demonstration." More interesting for our present purposes is philosophy's refusal "to provide guidelines for life [Lebensleitung]," because it more directly expresses insistence on the individual's autonomy. If philosophy as atheism resigns Lebensleitung, it is because it addresses the individual in his autonomy. If the rejection of Lebensleitung is linked specifically to philosophy's atheism, it implies, negatively, that religion does admit, and attempt to respond to, this urge. Religion (or pseudo-religions, Weltanschauungsphilosophien) appears in this context as an institution or instance assigning itself the task, or laying claim, to tell the individual what to do in life, what his task or destination is. Heidegger has however consequently rejected this claim both privately and in his philosophy. Dismissing such expectations, Heidegger writes to Löwith, "Ich kann mit Menschen nicht umgehen. Und eine 'Führung' wird immer ungeschickt." As to his philosophical thought, his insistence on the autonomy of the individual is only too manifest in what is often

\(^70\)SZ 35/59. The methodological character of Heidegger's "a-theism" is emphasized also by Otto Pöggeler in his paper "Destruction and Moment," in Reading Heidegger from the Start. Essays in His Earliest Thought, eds. T. Kisiel and J. van Buren (Albany, N. Y.: SUNY Press, 1994), 140f., 437 (note 5).

\(^71\)"The arrogance of thinking" is of course the wording of those who object to philosophy's "audacity" (Vermessenheit) in regard to its attempt at "letztliches, vor sich selbst gestelltes Fragen" in the quote of GA 17: 2f.
described as the emptiness of *Entschlossenheit* (the indeterminateness of its *Wozu*).\(^7\) *Entschlossenheit* remains also atheistic in this sense.

3.

The kind of religiosity from which Heidegger urges philosophy to be free in that footnote of the “Aristotle Introduction” is a seductive, tempting sort of worrying, in a word, something that Heidegger views as inauthentic. The characteristic expression of “forcibly inauthentic religiosity” turns up in Heidegger’s 1928 lecture course (“gewaltsam unechte Religiosität,” GA 26: 211), and all through his path of thinking Heidegger frequently criticized what he came to perceive as inauthentic forms of religiosity. Parallel with this criticism, he made continuous efforts to recuperate a kind of genuine religiosity: one in terms of his own thinking. After his critical remarks on inauthentic religiosity in 1926, he immediately went on to wonder whether “der echte Metaphysiker religiöser ist denn die üblichen Gläubigen, Angehörigen einer ‘Kirche’ oder gar die ‘Theologen’ jeder Konfession” (GA 26: 211).

The underlying idea is, very much along Overbeckian lines, that the inauthentic theology of the day (insisting on ever newer proofs of the existence of God, rather than orienting towards lived experience) not only is not able to oppose or fight the ruling irreligiosity or atheism of our epoch, but indeed fits in well with it, or even fosters and furthers it. Similarly, the thesis that the questioners (“die Fragenden”) are the genuine believers crops up in the *Beiträge* (GA 65: 12; see also ibid., 369), and the famous saying, “questioning is the piety of thinking,” (VA 40) bestows a religious overtone, on the whole of his later thinking. This is also the implicit suggestion of his conceiving of a-theism in *seinsgeschichtlich* terms in 1942-43 (see GA 54: 166f.), claiming that a-the-
ism, correctly understood, is nothing else but the oblivion of being. To call this oblivion to mind, namely, to put the Being-question, is then a kind of counter-movement to this seinsgeschichtlich kind of a-theism, well under way in European history. We should also bear in mind that Heidegger conceived of philosophy in terms of a counter-movement in his early lecture courses after the war.\textsuperscript{73}

Heidegger's distancing from the Christian outlook in the \textit{Beiträge} is embedded, generally, into his critique of the philosophy striving for Weltanschauung (a critique he repeatedly put forward from 1919 onwards). In particular, it is motivated by his insistence on philosophy's autonomy and by his ensuing rejection of its ideological use for weltanschaulich purposes, whether by the Church or political movements (GA 65: 12ff., 39ff., 41 ["total political faith" is treated as being identical to "total Christian faith"], 139ff.). The seinsgeschichtlich thought, he claims, is beyond all theology, but it is not, for this reason, atheism (GA 65: 439). Heidegger's devastating criticism of the theology of the day—a criticism elaborated along the line suggested by Overbeck, namely, that theology lacks real religiosity—leads him to orient the undoubtedly religious character of his later thinking toward seeking the right word (thereby remaining true to the task of the sort of theologian the young Heidegger conceived of himself as being) and leads him to find that word, eventually, in the dimension of silence, or stopping to speak, becoming silent. This is the new "logic" of philosophy that Heidegger now proclaims as "Sigetik" in the \textit{Beiträge}.\textsuperscript{74} This becoming silent in the right moment and place is presumably more able to preserve the religious dimension, that of the holy, than the traditional theological talk or concepts of God.

According to his own self-interpretation Heidegger can thus be seen to be a theo-logian in his later thinking, someone looking for, and trying to say, the word (logos) of God or the Gods, or of religion. That his later thinking cannot be taken as philosophy has long been clear. What I have attempted to show above is that the emergence of Heidegger's specific understanding of philosophy, or his identification of his thinking in terms of philosophy, owes a good deal to theological motives—even there, and there in particular, where he declares it to be "atheistic"—and is indeed inconceivable without the radicalization of some eminently theological and religious motives. This state of affairs is not altered by

\textsuperscript{73}See GA 61: 132, 153, 160, 178; GA 63: 15; PIA 243, 245.
\textsuperscript{74} See Pöggeler, \textit{Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers}, 276f. See now GA 65: 12, 78ff., 39, 510.
the fact that, in this endeavor, he was eventually brought to give up traditional Christian theological language and conceptuality.76

I wish to end my paper by a methodological observation. I said earlier in the paper that 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, and that this might be, on a first approach, the reason for (and the cause of) Heidegger's subsequent impact on theology (see p. above). Given the above discussion, we should restate things as follows. The question of Heidegger's relation to theology cannot be adequately addressed with either in terms of the multiple influence Heidegger exercised on twentieth century theology, or, conversely, in terms of the influence that theology exerted on Heidegger's path of thinking, but it is at the same time (and even more) a question inherent in Heidegger's path of thinking—a question concerning the relation, or, rather, the tension, between Heidegger's own endeavor and theology within Heidegger's thought itself.

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76"So it was finally not with the help of theology, but in turning away from it, as well as from the metaphysics and ontology which dominated theology, that the religious dimension sought for its language in Heidegger" (Gadamer, "Die religiöse Dimension," in Gesammelte Werke, vol. 3, 317). "In its final phase, too, Heidegger's thought took on a religious dimension, a mysterious and suggestive religiosity which was neither the Catholicism of his youth nor the Protestantism of the Marburg years, but which reminds us at once of Meister Eckhardt and Greek religion, of Christian mysticism and pagan religion." (Heidegger's God and the Lord of History," 445f.) "In an irreligious age, Heidegger has kept the horizon open for religious experience, more than anyone else has" (R. Safranksi, Ein Meister aus Deutschland. Heidegger und seine Zeit, 14).

To question the religious motivation inspiring Heidegger's thought throughout would amount to questioning a specific character inherent in Western Christianity. Indeed, as opposed to Eastern Christianity and most of the great world religions, it was Western Christianity that elaborated a theology in the sense of Theou-logos. The comportment of fides quaerens intellectum is, in this sense, a prerogative of Western Christianity. Heidegger seems to have been aware of that. In the concluding remark of his lecture course on the phenomenology of religion in 1920-21 he says: "Only a particular religiosity (for us the Christian) yields the possibility of its philosophical apprehension." (See Kisiel, The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time, 80.)
Appendix I

This, of course, is a somewhat rhetorical or overblown dramatization. It is, however, hardly a rhetorical or overblown dramatization to say that Heidegger's self-interpretation as a philosopher, namely, his identifying of what he is doing in terms of philosophy, has been, if not that negative, still, by no means easy and unproblematic throughout his life. The remark that "I have no philosophy at all" crops up in 1925 (GA 20: 417/301f.), and in the authorized protocol of his lecture "Time and Being," held in 1962, we find the assumption that "there would be a philosophy of Heidegger's" plainly rejected (SD 51). The first Marburg lecture course, whose text has recently been published, starts with the astonishing claim that it is not only not going to provide "groundwork," "program," or "system," but that "not even philosophy is to be expected" (my italics). For, he goes on to say, he is convinced that "philosophy is over." After extensive and detailed analyses of Aristotle, Husserl, Descartes and St. Thomas, having come full circle, he ends the course with the warning that it would be a "misunderstanding" to take what has been expounded "in the sense of some philosophy." To those who long after something of this sort Heidegger suggests they avoid his kind of research, claiming that it is outside the domain of what one usually names philosophy—his research, at best, the task of laying the ground (Boden) for something of the sort, he adds awkwardly. (GA 17: 1, 276f.). The last remark shows considerable parallels with the self-interpretation of the great Beiträge manuscript in the second half of the 30's; "philosophy now is first of all preparation of (for) philosophy," we read here (GA 65: 421). We should add that the later Heidegger's reluctance, or indeed rejection, of identifying his work with philosophy—following from his attempt at overcoming philosophy, namely, metaphysics, subsequent to his Kehre—of course has long been well known. Heidegger's "thinking," began Caputo in his first book on Heidegger, "is conducted at the limits of philosophy. Indeed, he even claims to be no longer doing philosophy at all." (The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought, p. 1; see also p. 4: "His thinking is no longer philosophy but arises out of the end of philosophy"). Caputo had the later Heidegger in mind, and rightly claimed that the project of Being and Time, in which Heidegger is engaged in pursuing "universal phenomenological ontology," namely, "fundamental ontology," "belongs to the province of philosophy"; the same holds evidently also for the book on Kant, doing "the metaphysics of metaphysics" (p. 4). In view of the new texts and documents that have appeared and that I am drawing on in this paper, we are now in a position to put into question the self-evidence attached to the philosophical character of the early work too, or to question the early Heidegger's
self-understanding even where he declares himself to be doing philosophy. We should see, in particular, a number of oscillations in Heidegger’s position before arriving at identifying phenomenology with philosophy within the frame of a universal phenomenological ontology in *Being and Time*. For example, he denies that hermeneutics (= hermeneutics of facticity, later to be called existential analytic as fundamental ontology) is philosophy in 1923 (GA 63: 20), and his concept of Vorwissenschaft, or of phenomenology as a pre-science (Vorwissens­chaft), are often conceived of as not pertaining to philosophy. With regard to BZ it is, for example, highly significant that this short exposition, or *Urform*, original form (as Gadamer and subsequently Sheehan called it) of *Being and Time* is not considered by Heidegger to pertain to philosophy (see BZ 62/2; H.-G. Gadamer: “Martin Heidegger und die Marburger Theologie,” *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, 197; T. J. Sheehan: “The ‘Original Form’ of Sein und Zeit: Heidegger’s *Der Begriff der Zeit* (1924),” *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 10, n. 2. [May 1979]: 78-83). See also GA 59: 191.

Appendix II

38 Overbeck “pronounced the same doubts,” writes Gadamer, “as the ones that were tormenting Heidegger” (Gadamer, “Die religiöse Dimen­sion,” in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 3, 315). “Overbeck’s questioning,” writes Kisiel, “which put the Christianness of ‘Christian theology’ itself ... into question, dominated Heidegger’s Marburg years, in particular, his dialogue with the theologians” (“War der frühe Heidegger tatsächlich ein ‘christlicher Theologe’?”, 75). “Heidegger set out on his path of thinking,” Pöggeler writes in his classic monograph, “in the vicinity of a theology that became more and more convinced that what it now came down to after the disorientation of primitive Christianity by both philo­sophy and theology for hundreds, in fact, for thousands of years, is to experience Christian faith in its originality, in an entirely new way” (*Der Denkweg Martin Heidegger* 2nd ed. [Neske: Pfullingen, 1983], 35f.). In particular, Pöggeler espies Overbeck’s influence in Heidegger’s thesis that “theology is not a science.” Heidegger, he writes, “persisted in what he learnt from Overbeck: religion is ‘myth’, and primitive Christianity began to decline when it got into the web of Greek philosophy.” “For Heidegger just as for Overbeck,” he wrote elsewhere, “live/vital religion can never become theology, can never be reconciled with science and philosophy.” (O. Pöggeler, *Neue Wege mit Heidegger*, 111; idem, *Schritte zu einer hermeneutischen Philosophie* [Freiburg/München: Alber, 1994], 485; Heidegger seems to have been particularly involved in a study of...
Overbeck’s works around 1922 (see Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time*, 556f.)

To come back to Heidegger, his revisitation of the philosophical foundations of theology leads to the Overbeckian insight that in European history, as Kisiel writes, “philosophy and theology have been deeply intertwined,” that “philosophy ... had contributed to the degeneration of the original Christian experience of life ...” (Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time*, 78). Wanting to pursue how Heidegger must have viewed philosophy’s contribution to the self-explication of original Christian experience of life, we find in the most recently published lecture courses some highly interesting hints. Let me recall some of them. In the lecture course of SS 1920 we read: “Es besteht die Notwendigkeit einer prinzipiellen Auseinandersetzung mit der griechischen Philosophie und der Verunstaltung der christlichen Existenz durch sie” (GA 59: 91; my italics). Of utmost importance is the fragmented conclusion of this passage: “Die wahrhafte Idee der christlichen Philosophie; christlich keine Etikette für eine schlechte und epigonhafte griechische. Der Weg zu einer ursprünglichen christlichen—griechentumfreien—Theologie” (the second italics mine). This remark is, as far as I can see, quite unique in Heidegger’s corpus in that it seems to commit itself to a renewal of theology, rather than of philosophy. The concept of “griechentumfreien Theologie” is perhaps the most manifest exemplification of Overbeck’s influence, although, of course, it may be asked to what extent we could still speak of a “theology,” once it were completely freed from Greek conceptuality. Recall that (in virtue of the infiltration of Greek philosophy) Overbeck dismissed all theology, rather than attempted to renew them. What Heidegger seems to urge here, is, from Overbeck’s point of view, a “rundlicher Kreis.” (See further ibid., p. 12.) See then the following passage from the recently published text of the 1923/24 lecture course: “... die christliche Theologie ständig von der Hand in den Mund gelebt hat und in der Aneignung wissenschaftlich begrifflicher Mittel Anschluß an die jeweilige Philosophie suchte, sofern auch in der Theologie gewisse Probleme des Daseins zur Sprache gebracht werden. Ob eine Theologie möglich ist, die ohne Anleihen an eine Philosophie ihre eigene Begriffllichkeit schöpft, soll hier nicht diskutiert werden. Jedenfalls hat bisher die Theologie nur von der Philosophie gelebt” (GA 17: 118; my italics; between the lecture course of 1920 and that of 1923/24 Heidegger seems to have realized how precarious or contradictory his 1920 urge must have been!). Concerning philosophy’s contribution to the degeneration of the original Christian experience of life, see the following consideration of the “Aristotle Introduction”: “The decisive prepossession of Being, that is, the being in motion, and the particular ontological explication of this being are the motive sources for the basic ontological structures which later decisively
determine god-like being in the specifically Christian sense (*actus purus*), inner-godly life (the Trinity), and thus at the same time the Being-relation of God to the human being, and thus the sense of Being proper to the human being itself. Christian theology and the philosophical 'speculation' which stands under its influence and the anthropology which always also develops within such contexts all speak in borrowed categories, categories which are alien to their own field of Being." (PIA 263/386; italics in original; in more detail GA 17: 188ff.) See also GA 58: 205: "The achievements of primitive Christianity were distorted and buried by the penetration into Christianity of the ancient science." Interestingly enough, there are quite a few hints to the contrary, namely concerning theology's or Christianity's contribution to the degeneration of philosophy. See, for example, GA 19: 254ff., the following quip: "It is Christianity that is basically responsible for the ... degeneration of philosophy" (see also GA 29/30: 65ff.). The reason may be that by then Heidegger may have transposed his religious concern, together with his interests in factic life experience, into Greek philosophy, whereby he now viewed Christianity as a shallow and life-alien theology, containing a distorted and petrified Greek philosophy. This perspective will then prevail in *Being and Time* and the later work.

Appendix III

68 "Dieser Feigheit vor dem Fragen verbrämt sich oft mit Religiosität. Letztliches, vor sich selbst gestelltes Fragen erscheint dieser Religiosität als Vermessenheit." (GA 17: 2ff.; my italics.) The verb "vermesen" appears also in the already cited passage of GA 61: 197, cited under note: Philosophy "darf sich gerade ob ihrer Grundtendenz nicht vermessen, Gott zu haben und zu bestimmen." (My italics.) Apparently, both parties accuse one another of audacity. For the pious man, questioning is audacious; for the philosopher, the pious man, is audacious or self-assured by claiming to possess God. Heidegger's rejection of "the audacity/daring [of claiming] to possess God and to be able to define Him," i.e., of the assumption that we may ever have a solid theoretical knowledge of God, parallels Kant's view who also sharply rejected the assumption that we may ever have theoretical knowledge of God, immortality, and the like, the main reason being of moral or practical character. Kant argued that such a knowledge is not only forever inaccassible for humans, but, also, for practical reasons, undesirable for them. Kant's conception of religion rests on eminently moral (i.e., not theoretical) grounds, and is based on the uncertainty of hope, rather than on the self-certainty of knowledge. "Es ist nicht wesentlich, und also nicht jedermann notwendig zu wissen, was Gott zu seiner Seligkeit tue, oder getan habe'; aber wohl, was er selbst zu tun habe, um dieses Beistandes
In an important footnote to this sentence Kant calls this kind of faith “reflektierende” and opposes it to a “dogmatic” faith; the latter appears to (human and finite) reason as “unaufrichtig” and “vermessen” (my italics) precisely because it proclaims itself as possessing knowledge (“der dogmatische [Glauben], der sich als ein Wissen ankündigt, ihr [der Vernunft] unaufrichtig und vermessen vorkommt ...”). See Kant, _Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft_ (Erstes Stück. Allgemeine Anmerkung), in Kant, _Metaphysik der Sitten_, Werkausgabe, ed. W. Weischedel, vol. VIII (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), 704. On the other hand, Heidegger’s centering of philosophy on radical questioning and delimiting it against the “seductive sort” of religiosity, also shows parallels with Kant in another important respect, namely with regard to how Kant definition of “Aufklärung” in “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung”, in Kant, _Werkausgabe_, vol. XI, 53; my italics). Compare Feigheit to its occurrence in Heidegger’s above cited passage of GA 17: 2. Compare also Heidegger’s already cited self-interpretation of philosophy in GA 63: 18. Both Heidegger and Kant conceive of philosophy in terms of coming of age over against the age of minority, characterized by the cowardice to use one’s own reason without the authority of others (in Kant) or by immaturity proper to a seductive, alluring, tempting sort of religiosity (in Heidegger). Heidegger’s favorite idiom “auf sich selbst stellen” (see note above) must be seen in this context as expressing precisely the kind of coming of age Kant speaks about in the above passage. This sort of coming of age implies for neither of them losing religiosity and becoming atheistic.