Which God Will Save Us? Jewish Receptions of Martin Heidegger's Philosophy





Daniel Herskowitz

Wolfson College

University of Oxford

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Abstract

To date, scholars addressing the theme of Martin Heidegger and religion have most often examined his roots in, and impact on, Christianity. With respect to Heidegger and Judaism, critical literature has almost exclusively taken a common perspective: it discusses Heidegger's view of Jews and the question of his antisemitism and Nazism. The present doctorate dissertation explores Jewish receptions of Heidegger's philosophy, claiming that from immediately after the publication of *Sein und Zeit* and throughout the twentieth century, a central prism through which Jewish thinkers read his work was a religious one, and that they engaged with it as a provocation and challenge to Judaism, however constructed. The thesis demonstrates that Heidegger is a key reference point in the negotiation of the boundaries between Judaism, Christianity, and secularism in twentieth century Jewish thought, and that the Jewish responses to his philosophy channel a disillusionment from the political-theological premises of the modern project.

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Introduction

> "The philosopher wants to be everything at once: prophet, healer, saviour, scholar, politician" (Lehmann, 1943).[1]
>
> "Heidegger is a static thinker, I am a more dynamic one. He feels closer to the Greeks, I feel closer to the Jewish prophets" (Max Scheler, in Berl, 1932).

The present study is an inquiry into Jewish receptions of Martin Heidegger's philosophy. To date, an overwhelming number of studies has been dedicated to the broad theme of Heidegger and the Jews. The majority of these studies take on a similar perspective: they examine Heidegger's view of Jews and deal with the question of his antisemitism and relation to the Nazi party. The recent publication of Heidegger's so-called Black-Notebooks brought about another wave of critical scholarship taking this perspective. Here, however, I address the topic of Heidegger and the Jews from the opposite perspective, examining reactions to Heidegger from a self-consciously *Jewish* perspective. Hence, I focus on what Jewish thinkers say of Heidegger, and less on what Heidegger says - or does not say - on Jews and Judaism.

This study aims to go beyond the common perspective on the theme of 'Heidegger and religion', which most often focuses on Heidegger's roots in, and impact on, Christian theology, and bring to the fore the generally overlooked Jewish perspective. I argue that like their Christian counterparts, a central prism through which twentieth century Jewish thinkers read Heidegger's work was a religious one, and that while they shared many of his philosophical assumptions and were often even impacted by his thought, these thinkers posited Judaism as the *alternative* to Heidegger. In this respect, the present study is the first critical analysis of Jewish receptions of Heidegger's philosophy, when read as an implicit or explicit religiously-charged framework. As we shall see, the examination of Jewish approaches to

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from German and Hebrew in the present study are my own.

Heidegger through a religious prism intersects at times with the Jewish receptions of existentialism, *Lebensphilosophie*, Nietzsche, Karl Barth, Kierkegaard, and even Hegel (and, to a lesser extent, Carl Schmitt). Fleshing these out constitutes strands for further scholarly exploration.

To avoid false expectations by the reader, I wish to be clear as to what is meant by 'Jewish' in the title. Heidegger had a remarkable cohort of gifted students who were Jews by decent and who later became distinguished figures in their respective fields. Some of these were dubbed, not entirely in good faith, 'Heidegger's Children' (Wolin, 2001; cf. Fleischacker, 2008). In order to preserve a definite argumentative line and a focused research question in the present study, Heidegger's students of Jewish origin are of interest only insofar as they offer an explicit encounter between a construction of Judaism and Heidegger's philosophy. To make this point clear, Hannah Arendt can serve as an example. Surely one of Heidegger's most brilliant students, Arendt's political philosophy is rightfully read, at least in part, as a response to her former teacher. Her thought is clearly grounded in her experiences as a Jew, and at times she points attention to theologically-inflected moments in Heidegger's thought (Arendt, 2007; 1973, and 1996). Yet Arendt does not bring to bear any straightforward construction of Judaism through her engagement with the religious charge of his philosophy. For this reason, while mentioned in passing, she will not be subjected to a thorough analysis.[2] It should also be stated that my overarching aim is not to outline Heidegger's 'influences' on some of his Jewish readers, although these no doubt exist and will be duly noted. By exploring 'receptions' rather than 'influences', I seek to account for a wider range of intellectual exchanges, including identification, incorporation, negotiation, critique and rejection. I have no pretension to exhaust the subject matter, especially within the layout of a doctorate dissertation. More can be said on the thinkers I discuss, and other thinkers could be included into the discussion as well. Hence the title of "receptions", rather than "the reception".

In the forthcoming chapters, I wish to establish that Heidegger is a key reference point in the negotiation of the boundaries between Judaism, Christianity, and secularism ('paganism') in twentieth century Jewish thought. For this reason, particular attention will be given to the thematic of secularization and

[2] The same is true with respect to Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Jacques Derrida. Since I confine my discussions to philosophical encounters with Heidegger, the poet Paul Celan - philosophically inclined as he indeed was –remains beyond the purview of the present study as well.

to the employment of the paradigm of Athens and Jerusalem, the convenient structure often put to use in the Jewish context to delineate its boundaries vis-à-vis Christianity and the general Western culture.[3]

Mise en scène

Since, like Heidegger himself, all the thinkers addressed in this thesis bear the marks of the turbulent era of interwar Germany in one way or another, a brief sketch of this context will set the stage for the discussion that follows.

Heidegger's philosophy took shape in a Germany gripped by a sense of decadence and crisis (Gordon and McCormick, 2013; Gay, 1968). The political and economic disaster ensuing the humiliating debacle in the Great War went hand in hand with a deep-seated cultural pessimism. The newly-born and unstable Weimar Republic staged a conflict that was both generational and ideational. Dissatisfied with the dominant schools of thought taught in the academic lecture halls, such as historicism and Neo-Kantianism, the younger generation voiced a desire for new and radical forms of thought. Reflecting an anxiety attached to the processes of rationalization and what Max Weber called the 'disenchantment' of modernity, many protested the comprehensive and systematic philosophical structures that ignored the individual's subjectivity and concreteness of her temporal existence (Gadamer, 1994a). The liberal bourgeois values of progress, reason, and universalism of the older generation were increasingly viewed as superficial, mechanistic, and soulless. A diminishing faith in the West corresponded with an increasing fascination with 'oriental' non-Western cultures and an enhanced appeal to the irrational and archaic (Marchand, 2000). The *Bildungsidealismus* that commanded the old order was gradually stripped of it prominence, and in its stead, matters of ontology, theology, and self-actuality came to the fore. In religion, a growing sense of a radical breach between an inadequate world and divine transcendence gave rise to what was then termed Gnostic or Marcionite attitudes. The thematics of *Deus absconditus* and *Deus revelatus* figured largely, and Pauline theology, with the dualisms associated with it, was intensely and creatively explored. This dualistic picture was complimented by the rise of a secular depiction of a radically immanent world. New questions concerning secularism, religion, and

[3] The background is, of course, the famous debate between Karl Löwith (1947) and Hans Blumenberg (1983) over the efficacy of the term 'secularization' for modern times.

their relations presented themselves as urgent (Lazier, 2012). Are these two positions incongruent, or are they in fact two sides of the same coin? Is secularism solely a rejection of religion, or can it be construed theologically? What is the religious and moral status of the world absent of God? Is salvation possible in an utterly fallen world? Can the individual achieve self-actuality when her existence is governed by the experience of alienation and not-at-homeness? Can transcendence be found in immanence? With a palpable eschatological tension, it was a time that experienced itself as "Zwischen den Zeiten". The 'world of yesterday' was crumbling, but a new order was not yet in sight. Perhaps nothing manifests the temperament of the time better than the surge in popularity of Søren Kierkegaard. In underscoring the 'infinite qualitative difference' between God and humanity, in appropriating and redefining the scholastic concept of 'Existenz' from its traditional meaning of substantiation of 'essence' to the basic human situation of experience, decision, and life, and in levelling a decisive critique against the all-encompassing Hegelian idealism, the Danish thinker struck a resonant chord. And within this fraught atmosphere, it was *Existenzphilosophie* and Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (1927) that sparked a fire in the young generation's already kindled soul.

For the Jews, the unsteady times of Weimar bore both great promise and great peril. The liberal constitution granted the Jews their coveted aspiration of equality and was in this respect the fulfilment of the long-sought struggle for emancipation. As 'outsiders' who became 'insiders', Jews were allowed participation in many cultural and professional spheres that had been previously closed off to them. An explosion of Jewish creativity and involvement in science, art, literature, religion, philosophy, and political activism ensued. Yet alongside an indisputable Jewish flourishing, the tumultuous Weimar Republic witnessed an aggravation of reactionary, neoconservative, and anti-Semitic forces. The delusion of Jewish assimilation led many to Zionism and Socialism, and also spurred a process of dissimilation and a revival of Jewish self-assertion and desire for authenticity (Brenner, 1996). Indeed, culturally and intellectually immersed as they were, the young generation of Jewish intellectuals heralded an equivalent revolt against the previous generation's worldview, with its synthesis of Kantianism and Judaism and the more general conflation of Judaism with the values of the

enlightenment, which was so carefully fashioned by nineteenth century Jewish liberal thinkers, and above all, by Hermann Cohen.

The protest against Cohen's philosophical worldview and its complementary political-theological position is central to understanding the conceptual drive fuelling the various Jewish receptions of Heidegger, and thus deserves some elaboration. Cohen, the founder of the Marburg School of Neo-Kantianism, was the leading philosophical voice of his generation. As a Jew, he was also occupied in an apologetic effort of establishing the legitimacy of Judaism in modernity by depicting it as compatible and epitomizing German liberal values and sensitivities (Myers, 2001). In his understanding, the German spirit was indebted to two sources: ancient Greece and Judaism. "Plato and the prophets", he asserts, "constitute the two most important well-springs of modern [German] culture" (Cohen, 1923, 618). For this reason, Judaism is not only compatible with the peak of European spirit, it is also indispensable to it. Using a Protestant conceptual framework and a highly selective reading of sources, Cohen knitted the biblical prophets, Plato, Maimonides, and Kant into a narrative of a shared German-Jewish ethico-religious vocation. This theoretical construct supported Cohen's political-theological worldview concerning the so-called 'German-Jewish symbiosis'. According to this position, Jews are an essential part of German nationality, and hence for Germany to fulfil its historical destiny, the equal share of Jews in German culture must be admitted.

Cohen's apologetic efforts came as a response to a common accusation of Judaism's antiquarianism, irrelevance, and overall alien character voiced by nineteenth century *Religionswissenschaftlers*, with the effective theologico-political vision of de-Judaizing Christianity and Germany. In the nineteenth century debates, for most Germans and particularly liberal Protestant intellectuals, granting the Jews emancipation was a contract with provisions. Equality was the reward, and complete assimilation, that is, conversion, was the condition. Supersessionist theological positions merged with a desire for a unified national identity in which Germanism and Protestantism were conflated. Academic scholarship was harnessed to this end, and findings in the fields of biblical studies, archaeology, philology, and history validated present-day anti-Jewish theological positions and sentiments. At times, the recurring theme of Christianity's emergence through the negation of Judaism was blended with racial theory

which drew a strict line between the Aryan-German and Semitic-Jewish race. The implicit political-theological statement of this general intellectual endeavour was clear: Judaism is at odds with the Christian Protestant character of Germany, and the Jews have no place in the German *Volk*. By presenting Judaism as the root of the prevailing values of contemporary Germanism, Cohen's outlook strategically addressed these adversary voices.

Cohen's account of the Jewish-German fellowship was founded upon faith in progress, reason, and universal morality that were the cornerstone of the predominantly *Bildungsbürgertum* German-Jews' identity. However, this was precisely the order that was under attack by the younger Jewish generation. For them, Cohen embodied the inauthentic liberal and bourgeois Judaism that willingly surrendered itself for the sake of acceptance and clothed its Judaism with a Christian-Protestant garment. Moreover, the unstable social and political reality of Weimar deemed his treasured political-theological dream passé. In a dynamic that began before the Great War but accelerated throughout the interwar period, the desire for an authentically Jewish religiosity generated a rethinking of Judaism in light of present sensitivities (Wasserstorm, 1997). As we shall see, *Existenzphilosophie* in general and Heidegger's philosophy in particular were often consulted as part of this effort (Meyer, 2009, 273-308).

Yet the new spiritual climate presented its own challenges. In its Christian manifestation, the rejection of nineteenth century liberalism took the form of unstitching the synthesis of Christianity and culture. From the Jewish perspective, however, the rejection of liberalism was often framed as a denunciation of the foreign Protestant conceptuality that had been internalized by Jewish apologists. Foreign, unauthentic, and ill-suited, the Protestant framework was to be discarded and replaced by an authentic form of Jewish expression. But were the philosophical and theological perspectives available to replace the deficient frameworks of the past themselves neutral? Do the Christian theological undertones in *Existenzphilosophie* deem it unsuitable for authentic Jewish thought? Moreover, the rise of Gnostic and Marcionite attitudes carried a reverberating anti-Jewish import of supersessionism and anti-Semitism. These complemented the rise of radical German nationalism and reactionary forces that perceived the Jews as the German 'misfortune'. In this respect, despite the revolt against earlier patterns of reflections, key strands of German interwar philosophy and theology continued the nineteenth century objective of

severing the historical ties between Judaism and Christianity and between present-day Jews and Christians (Tal, 1975; Schwarzschild, 1986).

The backdrop of this study, therefore, is the collapse of faith in reason and the liberal world of the nineteenth century, and the possibilities, challenges, and impasses that emerged as a result of this collapse. While Hermann Cohen died almost a decade before the publication of *Sein und Zeit*, his philosophical worldview and vision of Judaism continued to reverberate throughout twentieth century European Jewish thought, and covertly looms large over a century of Jewish receptions of Heidegger. This is because the disillusionment from, and rebellion against, the Cohenian picture was shared both by Heidegger and the majority of the Jewish thinkers that will be examined in the present study. As we shall see, Jews began to engage with Heidegger immediately after the publication of his *Sein und Zeit* (1927) and continued to do so throughout the twentieth century. Yet it is the political climate, the conceptual terms, and the pressing experiences of Jews in the interwar period that determined the ensuing Jewish receptions of the philosopher from Messkirch.

Obviously, marking this encounter is Heidegger's public endorsement of the Nazi party only shortly after the publication of his *magnum opus*, and the general sense that in this case philosophy and politics are intimately intertwined. Yet as we shall see, his philosophy was never completely reduced to his politics, but rather repeatedly interpreted in light of a particular religious charge identified in it. In this respect, the present study argues that the Jewish receptions of Heidegger do not only reflect an engagement with a profoundly challenging philosopher, but also channel a grappling with the Jewish disillusionment from the promises of emancipation and their response to what they took to be the theological presumptions of the modern project.

Chapter Layout

The layout of the study is as follows:

Chapter 1 sets the stage for the following chapters by attending to the questions of the relation between Heidegger's philosophy and Christianity. By focusing on his claim for neutrality towards theology and the theme of secularization, the chapter outlines the transitions of Heidegger's thought from his early theological endeavors to *Sein und Zeit* and to his later thought. The chapter also discusses the early

Christian reception of *Sein und Zeit* by Protestant and Catholic theologians, framing the descriptive and evaluative examination of the following analyses of the Jewish engagements with Heidegger.

Chapter 2 portrays how the intellectual and generational split in German interwar culture between 'old', rational and idealistic thinking, and 'new', experiential and existential thinking, is manifested in the early Jewish receptions of Heidegger. It does this by focusing on the battle over the legacy of Kant typified in the famous Davos encounter and by fleshing out the political and theological resonances of this encounter in terms of its bearings on the debate over the ties between *Judentum* and *Deutschtum*. As I show, Ernst Cassirer and Franz Rosenzweig can be seen as representing the 'typical' reaction to Heidegger from the perspective of 'old thinking' and 'new thinking', respectively. As part of this examination, I situate the trend, common nowadays, of juxtaposing Rosenzweig and Heidegger within the larger context of Heidegger's Jewish reception.

In Chapter 3 I show that the secularized Christian terminology and the presumption of Dasein's godless existence in *Sein und Zeit* led a variety of Jewish thinkers in interwar Germany and Palestine to conclude that Heidegger's existential analysis of Dasein is mired in Christian assumptions, outlines a Christian conception of human existence, and is thus ill-suited for Jewish expression. This reading of Heidegger is contextualized within the wider debate at the time regarding the theological inflection of the perspective of *Existenzphilosophie*, the juxtaposition of Heidegger, Kierkegaard, and Barth, and the anti-Jewish political-theological reverberations of the 'Gnostic' and 'Marcionite' perspectives with which Heidegger was associated.

Chapter 4 is a critical examination of Martin Buber's decades-long fascination and confrontation with Heidegger's philosophy. This chapter expands previous scholarship's prime focus on Buber's conception of I-Thou in relation to Heidegger's notion of being-with (*mit-Sein*) and exposes Buber's far more extensive engagement with – and assault on – Heidegger's earlier and later works, including a latent quarrel over the appropriation of the German poet Hölderlin. I show that Buber shadowboxed Heidegger for his entire mature life and sought to construct a Jewish-dialogical alternative, which I term 'dwelling prophetically', to what he called Heidegger's monological thought and its ideal of 'dwelling poetically'.

In Chapter 5, dedicated to Leo Strauss's critique of Heidegger, I argue that it is primarily Heidegger's debt to Christianity that Strauss perceives as the greatest challenge to both philosophy and authentic Judaism. I concentrate on Strauss's depiction of Heidegger as a historicist and a nihilist and analyse how Strauss both utilizes Heidegger to extend his critique of what he took to be the modern Jewish crisis, and at the same time draws on his work to signal towards the overcoming of this crisis. The chapter also traces the hesitant shift in Strauss's critical approach towards Heidegger's later writings.

Chapter 6 aims to organizes Abraham Joshua Heschel's otherwise unsystematic critique of and rejoinder to Heidegger, and presents is as a coherent, unified theological argument. By reviewing Heschel's writings from his early years as a philosophy student in the Weimar-era Berlin to his mature works in the 1960s, I demonstrate that for Heschel, Heidegger puts forth a paganist framework of radical immanence that dehumanizes Dasein and deifies being. In contrast to this, Heschel advances his account of the biblical God of pathos, who is transcendent to the world but at the same time is also the concerned Lord of being.

Chapter 7 traces Emmanuel Levinas's life-long struggle with Heidegger's philosophy, from the 1930s to the 1980s, through the prism of the confrontation he posits between what he considers to be Heidegger's paganism and his own account of Judaism and ethics. I argue that Levinas mimics Heidegger's methodology and develops an existential hermeneutic of being-Jewish in his early writings as an alternative to Heidegger's 'pagan' analytic, which then serves as the core building blocks for the contrast between what he calls ethics and ontology in his mature writings. As I show, in both method and content, Levinas's philosophy is more indebted to and dependent on Heidegger's scheme than he is willing to admit, as is his account of Judaism.

As will be seen, through a dialectic of attraction and repulsion, the Jewish thinkers addressed in this thesis develop a version of Judaism that seeks to offer the way out of the overall crisis plaguing the West, which is embodied, as they see it, in Heidegger's life and thought.

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Chapter 1: *Herkunft* and *Zukunft*: Heidegger, Christian Theology, and Secularization

Introduction

In a particularly honest moment, Heidegger describes his struggle with Christianity as "affecting the whole path of my questioning so like subterranean, seismic shocks […] [A]nd who should fail to recognize that my entire path so far has been accompanied by a salient engagement with Christianity: an engagement that has never taken the form of an explicitly raised 'problem', but was rather at once the preservation of, and *at the same time* a painful separation from, my ownmost provenance—the childhood house, home and youth" (GA 66, 44-28, 415/ Heidegger, 2006, 368). Recognizing the paramount importance of Christianity in the development of Heidegger's thought is fundamental for understanding it, and it is equally vital for coming to grips with his Jewish receptions.

Setting the stage for the thesis as a whole, the present chapter aims to do three things. First, it establishes the integral role of Heidegger's engagement with Christianity for the development of the ideas laid out in *Sein und Zeit*, and examines in particular the transition from his early theological endeavors to the analytic of Dasein in his 1927 *magnum opus*. In the centre of the discussion stand the themes of secularization and the self-professed theological neutrality of his philosophy. Second, it lays out the general continuity between Heidegger's early and later thinking with respect to his fundamental position regarding the relationship between philosophy and theology. Third, some of the initial debates in Christian theological circles surrounding Heidegger's work are surveyed. Since an exhaustive account of the evolution of Heidegger's thought as well as the knotty contours of 'Heidegger and Christianity' are beyond the scope of the present study, we shall confine ourselves to some key moments with regards to Christianity's bearings on Heidegger's early masterpiece.

Heidegger's Theological Inception

Since the publication of the 'earliest' Heidegger's lectures and notes, it has become undeniable that the trajectory of Heidegger's philosophy as a whole is thoroughly indebted to his Christian origins (Van

Buren, 1994; Kisiel, 1995; Kisiel and Van Buren, 1994; Kisiel and Sheehan, 2007).[4] Biographically, the young Heidegger was raised in a deeply religious Catholic home in the rural Messkirch in Baden. As he came of age, he aspired to become a priest and began formation in a Jesuit seminary. While his quest for priesthood was cut short, Heidegger remained a passionate disciple of the Catholic faith, publishing polemical and apologetic pieces in various conservative Catholic journals and enrolling as a student of Catholic theology at the University of Freiburg. His initial philosophical training was in Neo-Scholastic and Neo-Kantian methodology, writing his dissertation on psychologism (1913) and his *Habilitationsschift* on "Duns Scotus' Doctrine of Categories and Signification" (1915). However, increasing dissatisfaction with the assumptions and efficiency of his philosophical commitments, and his eventual marriage to the Protestant Elfride Petri in 1917 contributed to his estrangement from Catholicism and the adoption of the Protestant confession. Correlatedly, he immersed himself in what was at the time regarded as the anti-metaphysical Protestant theological tradition, which included the writings of Paul, Augustine, Luther, Schleiermacher, Overbeck, Kierkegaard, Dilthey, and others, which had an immense impact on the development of his original thought.[5] Famously, in a letter to his student Karl Löwith from 1921, Heidegger described himself as a Christian theologian.

The writings and lectures from this early period hold the nascent formulation of much of his later influential work. A central theme in Heidegger's early intellectual endeavors is the rejection of the 'Scholastic' attitude of *philosophia perennis*, with its ideal of static, a-temporal, and metaphysical abstraction, in favour of an attitude faithful to the factical lived experience. Metaphysical language, he believed, objectifies, de-worlds and de-historicizes the immersive and unsurveyable flow of being. One correctly finds echoes of Wilhelm Dilthey's historical focus (drawn from Hegel) in Heidegger's rejection of the detached and a-temporal Greek metaphysics and shift toward the historical, temporal,

[4] Much has been written on Heidegger and Christianity. See Macquarrie (1994); Wolfe (2014); Caputo (2000); Caputo (1993); O'meara (1986); Hodgson (1969); Crowe (2006); Crowe (2008); McGrath and Wierciński (2010); Vedder (2007); Kovacs (1990); Fischer and von Hermann (2007).

[5] While there is no denying that Heidegger's Catholic upbringing and scholastic training left their mark on his work (Ott, 1995), the focus on the Protestant layers in his thought is due the fact that it is mainly these that are picked up by his Jewish readers. Of course, the twentieth century is replete with Catholic thinkers who were attracted to Heidegger's thinking. Karl Rahner, Bernhard Welte, Hans Urs von Balthazar, Johannes Baptist Lotz, Richard Williamson, Max Müller, John D. Caputo, to name only a few, drew to differing extents on Heidegger for their respective theologies.

and factical existence. Heidegger also follows Dilthey in attributing the origin of this shift to the advent of early Christianity (Heidegger, 2009; Fehér, 1994). For Dilthey, this shift is rooted in the incarnation, wherein "God's essence, instead of being grasped in the self-enclosed concept of substance of antiquity, was now caught up in historical vitality. And so historical consciousness, taking the expression in its highest sense, first came into being" (Dilthey, 1988, 230). Christianity validates history as the site of significance, Dilthey holds, for it is the realm in which the drama of Christ's life, suffering, and death unfolded. Mirroring this view, Heidegger states in the 1919/1920 lecture course "Basic Problems of Phenomenology" that "the deepest historical paradigm for the peculiar process whereby the main focus of factical life and the life-world shifted into the self-world and the world of inner experience gives itself to us in the emergence of Christianity" (GA 58, 61-62/ Heidegger, 2013, 47). One of Heidegger's first independent phenomenological undertakings is an attempt to explicate this originary inward religious experience from within. It should be noted that by approaching religion as a phenomenological lived experience, Heidegger intentionally rebels against the *Religionswissenschaft* school's approach to religion as an object of science. Moreover, by this time, he has also already departed from the phenomenological method of his mentor Edmund Husserl, with its transcendental phenomenological reduction and non-empirical, pure consciousness of transcendental subjectivity. In its stead, he developed an alternative phenomenology centring on the hermeneutics of facticity of Dasein's being-in-the-world (Sheehan, 1997, 1-32; Crowell, 1990; Crowell, 2002; Kisiel, 1989; Ott, 1993, 172-86; Van Buren, 1990; Caputo, 1977). Heidegger found this model of phenomenology to be particularly potent for the task of uncovering the pristine existential disposition of authentic religiosity, which is found, he believed, in *Urchristentum* unadulterated by "Greekanizing" (GA 61, 6/ Heidegger, 2001, 6). This is because he claimed phenomenology's liberation from the agglomeration of unnecessary pre-conceived conceptuality and its focus on the pre-theoretical immediacy of facticity is tantamount to the liberation of the immediacy of factical being-Christian from the restrictions of alien Aristotelian metaphysical categories. As such, Heidegger perceived himself as reenacting the rare yet "powerful eruptions" of authentic Christian assertion found as well "in Augustine, in Luther, in Kierkegaard" (GA 58, 205/ Heidegger, 2013, 155).

Participating in the contemporary resurgence of Pauline theology, Heidegger turns to Paul's letters to the Galatians and to the Thessalonians – the earliest texts of the New Testament – in the winter semester lecture course given in 1920/1921, as part of his aim to unearth the experience of primordial Christian life (von Hermann, 2007). These texts are not systematic philosophical treatises, and deliberately so. They are external to the metaphysical-scholastic tradition and, as epistles, convey the situation of a concrete, temporal existence. Consonant with the then-prevalent view, Heidegger presents an eschatologically-centred account of early Christianity. In his reading of Paul, the coming of Christ as a moment of actualization is not to be understood as an event which will come to pass in a certain particular moment. "Paul does not say 'When'", he observes, "because this expression is inadequate to what is to be expressed" (GA 60, 102/ Heidegger, 2004, 72). The indeterminacy of the Second Coming grounds a life of insecure anticipation, emphasizing the lack, the still-to-come of salvation. Authentic Christian life, Heidegger determines, subsists in the experience of not-yet, in the pending openness in the face of divine absence, in the eschatological suffering and fragility in light of the undetermined *Parousia* (Wolfe, 2013; Roesner, 2007). Being Christian consists of inhabiting a certain mode of temporality; more specifically, it is the unstable historical process of *becoming* Christian, whereby the anticipated eschatological future throws the believers back unto their 'already-having-become' Christians, creating the uncertainty of the present 'now being' which can reach its abrupt end at any given moment. In *Sein und Zeit*, one finds a replication of this tripartite originary Christian existence in the phenomenological construal of Dasein's ec-static temporality. The very conceiving of Dasein's existence in terms of temporality is modelled in accordance with the earlier eschatological hermeneutic of primordial Christian religiosity. Importantly, however, the configuration of temporality that is spelled out in his early lectures on Paul is de-Christianized in the Dasein analytic, where Dasein's being-toward-death replaces anticipating the *parousia*.

It this context, Heidegger contrasts in passing the eschatological tendencies of early Christianity with "late-Judaism" [*Spätjudentum*], for whom the messianic anticipation is directed at the coming to pass of a particular futural moment (GA 60, 114; Heidegger, 2004, 81). With this judgment, he implicitly couples Judaism with Greek metaphysics, both of which betray what Kierkegaard calls the 'vulgar'

conception of temporality as the succession of present moments; time as chronology (*chronos*), *Historie*. As Heidegger explains soon after, in this account time undergoes an "homogenization" – "an assimilation of time to place, to Presence pure and simple" (Heidegger, 1992, 18e). As such it correlates with the defunct 'ontology of presence', as it presupposes that "to be" means "to have presence in the moment that now is" (SZ 373/ BT 425-6). He also tacitly plants the seed for the bond that will be developed later between Judaism, calculativity, and technology, when he clarifies that in this objectifying conception "time becomes fully mathematized" (Heidegger, 1992, 18). In contrast to this rendition of time stands the authentic Christian *Øieblikket*, time as eschatology (*kairos*), *Geschichte* (cf. Kierkegaard, 1980, 55). In *Sein und Zeit,* this temporal distinction is reproduced in the distinction between the inauthentic relation to death characterizing *das Man,* that of awaiting [*Erwartung*] for a futural point in time in which death 'comes to pass', and the authentic anticipation [*Vorlaufen*] toward death, in which Dasein's possibilities in the present are illuminated by its being-ahead-of-itself [*Sich-vorweg-sein*].

The textual analysis of Paul is profoundly colored by perhaps the most crucial theological influence on Heidegger at the time, the early Martin Luther. Heidegger began reading Luther, who he refers to as "a companion" in his quest, around 1918 in Freiburg and even taught seminars on Luther with Rudolf Bultmann in Marburg after moving there in 1923 (GA 63, 5/ Heidegger, 1999a, 4; Van Buren, 1994); McGrath, 2005; Pöggeler, 1987; Lehmann, 2007; Stanley 2010). Heidegger was inspired by Luther's attempt to purge Christianity from the infiltration of Greek metaphysics. Luther's admonishment of the scholastic belief in a natural and speculative access to the divine, as well as his emphasis on God's extreme externality was particularly impactful on Heidegger. His portrayal of Christian existence in a world bereft of a radically distant God who is experienced only as absence and concealment reflects Luther's pessimistic anthropology of the postlapsarian human state of existence as *status corruptionis*. According to the dominant reading at the time to which Heidegger concedes, Luther held that the corruption of the Fall is so deep and constitutive that it completely eliminates its prelapsarian character, generating an unbridgeable gap between God and the human being. This view is contrasted to Scholastic theology's belief that while deeply marred by the Fall, something of the original prelapsarian state of

human existence remains, and thus some form of continuum and connection between God and the human being is maintained. That Heidegger adheres to this view is evident from a 1923 lecture course, where he defends Luther's radical anthropological view over against Max Scheler's idea of the human's natural orientation to God. The human being is not a "God seeker", as per Scheler, but is by definition in "a *status corruptionis*", a state of "*ignorantia Dei*" which is "a determinatively negative relation to God, in which man stands against God" – and Heidegger adds: "*this* is as such *constitutive*!" (GA 63, 27/ Heidegger, 1999a, 22-3; Scheler, 1915, 346). It is worth noting that by adopting the doctrine of the radical otherness of God and the abyss between the world and God, Heidegger accords with the present-day 'Gnostic' theological trend permeating Germany at the time. However, unlike the typical gnostic attitude, through his focus on factical life, the absence of God does not lead to a devaluation of the world, but rather, paradoxically, to the opposite: the anxiety embedded in the salvation-seeking historical temporality reveals this world as the arena of meaning.

Luther's mark is also discernible in the lecture course entitled "Augustine and Neoplatonism" in the following 1921 summer semester, dedicated to book X of Augustine's *Confessions* (Coyne, 2015; van Fleteren, 2005; de Paulo, 2006). Carrying out the unlikely exegetical attempt to extract Neoplatonism from Augustine, Heidegger differentiates between 'metaphysical' ('Greek') and 'factical' ('Christian') layers in Augustine and parallels them to Luther's distinction between *theologia gloriae* and *theologia crucis*. The former is manifested in Augustine's hope to reach eternal and all-fulfilling peace in God, the *summum bonum*. This Scholastic-metaphysical God, Heidegger contends, following Luther, is an object of conceptual vision and thus a readily available, calculatable, and masterable God; a God of presence, an idol. The message of the Cross, on the other hand, is that the Christian God, the *Deus absconditus*, is not a God of harmony and serenity but of concealment, fear, and trembling. The historical facticity of the Christian in-faith is thus constituted by the struggle, guilt, and humility of finite existence in face of divine absence. Here, as in his exegesis of Paul, it is the mood, the affordance [*Befindlichkeit*] - a notion which Heidegger seems to have developed on the basis of Augustine's *affectio* - which is central, and it remains so in *Sein und Zeit*'s phenomenological hermeneutic of Dasein. Likewise, the feature of Dasein's guilt [*Schuld*] is foreshadowed in the irreducibility of existential guilt

to any religiously-charged action, be it sin or partaking in Christ's suffering. And as Heidegger readily admits, the very characterization of Dasein's as care [*Sorge*] was first uncovered in his reading of Augustine (SZ, 199/ BT 492; GA 20, 418/ Heidegger, 1985, 302). Indeed, as Van Buren (1994, 167) put it, in *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger turns Luther's *theologia crucis* into an *ontologia crucis*.[6]

Shortly after the lectures on Paul and Augustine are delivered, Aristotle and then Kant assume central stage in Heidegger's development. Yet there is no question that his engagements with the canonical Christian texts markedly effect his approach toward these philosophers. Indeed, since many fundamental categories of Dasein's ontological explication are prefigured in the configuration of 'religious existence' in these early commentaries on Paul and Augustine, they are rightly considered core building blocks in the development of his thought towards *Sein und Zeit*.

A-theistic Phenomenology and the Question of Neutrality

Before we turn to *Sein und Zeit*, a point about the theological inflection of Heidegger's phenomenological method is in place. In the early 1920s, Heidegger adopts an a-theistic methodology, one which does not take a definitive stand on the question of God but rather brackets it out of the philosophical purview. In his 1921-1922 lecture course "Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle", he exclaims that "Philosophy, in its radical, self-posing questionability, must be *a-theistic* as a matter of principle. Precisely on account of its basic intention, philosophy must not presume to possess or determine God" (GA 61, 197-198/ Heidegger, 2001, 148). In one respect, Heidegger is following Husserl's "principle of presuppositionlessness" ["*des Prinzip der Voraussetzungslosigkeit*"], whereby metaphysical speculations and the positive teachings of all scientific fields are to be bracketed from the inquiry of phenomenology (Husserl, 1976, 188). However, it would be a mistake to overlook the fact that Heidegger's bracketing of God is at the same time consistent with the Lutheran commitment to radical divine externality and acknowledgment of human forsakenness. From within the utterly sinful world, no recourse to God can be made; human existential structures are to be articulated on their own

[6] As one noted Luther scholar claims, "Heidegger's existential analytic of human Dasein is a radical secularization of Luther's anthropology". Schlink (1995, 6), quoted in Van Buren (1994, 159). This is not to say that that Heidegger's early interpretations of Luther, Kierkegaard, Paul, and Augustine do not reach conclusions that are at odds with their thinking.

terms. Correspondingly, "the object of philosophical research", Heidegger maintains, "is the human Dasein as it is interrogated with respect to the character of its being" (GA 62, 348-49). Revelation and salvation are externally granted, erupting from without, and hence not given phenomenologically. Nor is God ever given as a *Gegenstand* of phenomenological investigation. Consequently, as beyond the phenomenological horizon, any recourse to God must be excluded from philosophical reflection as well. Phenomenology is and only can be concerned with the immanent world of human existence, and is thus limited, from within, by human finitude. Not God or eternity, but rather death is the horizon of human existence. Following Luther, Heidegger's approach draws a clear line of demarcation between theology and philosophy, thereby methodologically emancipating theology from the constraints of philosophy and philosophy from dealing with claims of faith. "Could it be", he suggests, "that the very idea of a philosophy of religion […] is pure nonsense?" (GA 62, 363n54).

Not unlike Husserl, who perceived his "atheological" phenomenological approach as a way of arriving "at God without God" (Jaegerschmidt, 2001; Moran, 2005, 16-8), Heidegger initially intended this methodology to operate as a *preparatio evangeliae*. "The more radical philosophy is", he remarks, "the more determinately is it on a path away from God; yet, precisely in the radical actualization of the 'away', it has its own difficult proximity to God" (GA 61, 197-8/ Heidegger, 2001, 148).[7] Yet Heidegger held fast to this a-theistic methodology also after he parted company with Christianity in the mid-1920s. This is evident from his lecture "Phenomenology and Theology", delivered shortly after the publication of *Sein und Zeit*, to the Protestant theological faculty in Tübingen (and then in Marburg). In this lecture he articulates his views on the relationship between philosophy (phenomenology) and theology more systematically. He proceeds by dismissing the common way of approaching the matter through the distinction of reason/faith, in favor of the distinction - so central to entire project of *Sein und Zeit* - between the ontological ('existential') dealing with being and the ontic ('existentiell') dealing with beings. Ontic sciences, Heidegger determines, deal with their respective ontic subjects and take for granted the being of their researched entities. The subject of inquiry of philosophy as ontology, on the

[7] In 1925 Heidegger reiterates: "Philosophical research is and remains atheism" (GA 20, 109/ Heidegger, 1985, 80).

other hand, is being as such, and thus it serves as the ultimate foundation for all ontic sciences. Theology, according to Heidegger, is a positive ontic science, dedicated to "the specific mode of being of the Christian occurrence". And as is the case with any ontic science, any attempt of scientific systemization or reflection on its pre-Christian foundation requires calling upon philosophy. However, theology needs philosophy only as the 'science of faith'; in terms of its particular content and concepts, it functions autonomously. This is because theology is a "calling to faith in faith"; the disclosure of "theological knowledge" is grounded in faith itself and not given outside of faith. Its self-attestation, as Heidegger asserts in *Sein und Zeit*, "remains closed off in principle from any philosophical experience" (SZ 306/ BT 496). In this regard, it is restricted to a specific realm of operation and is "absolutely different from philosophy" - indeed, as he puts it, "faith is so absolutely the mortal enemy" of philosophy.

It is significant that Heidegger designates theology, as a positive science, to the ontic sphere, and that he claims that "God is in no way the object of investigation in theology", but rather "the "believing comportment itself" (GA 9, 25/ Heidegger 1976, 15; Wrathall, 2006; Brogan, 2006). This positioning allows Heidegger to neutralize theology's common claim to probe into the nature of being, and thus intercepts in advance the potential competition with philosophy over its subject matter. Theology, he maintains, is "closer to chemistry and mathematics than to philosophy". It is important to notice that while Heidegger insists that any ontological structure is always ontically concretized and never free-floating, the ontic-ontological distinction nevertheless allows him to separate the concrete, 'tainted' and 'committed' ontic instantiations from their uncommitted ontological structures. And so, by positing ontology as a-theistic and undergirdingly prior to ontic theology - Christian and non-Christian alike – fundamental ontology emerges as principally *neutral* with regards to theology. Repeating this conviction, Heidegger claims in 1929 that "the ontological interpretation of Dasein as Being-in-the-world does not determine against or in favour of a possible Being-toward-God [*Sein zu Gott*]" (GA 9, 159n56/ Heidegger, 1969a, 91n56).

Yet despite the assumption that the separation between theology and philosophy allows for ontological neutrality, it is hardly clear whether this separation itself is neutral. As indicated above, the radical

demarcation between theology's and philosophy's domains of operation, as well as the refusal to mix faith and thinking matches the predispositions of a particular Protestant framework wherein the relation between philosophy and theology is problematized from the outset. Heidegger's claim that Christian philosophy is a "square circle" and that faith is the "mortal enemy" of philosophy bear a particularly Lutheran ring as well. In contrast, other religious traditions, Christian and non-Christian alike, hold that philosophy supports and serves natural theology, and therefore partakes in the shared task of elucidating the natural relation between creature and creator (Russell, 2011). As we shall see, this self-announced theological neutrality will be repeatedly contested by both Heidegger's Christian and Jewish receptions.

Sein und Zeit

In his 1927 masterpiece *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger takes his task to be to attain to the forgotten question of the meaning of being, the *Seinfrage*, and raise it anew in the right way. Being, he claims, comes into view only indirectly, through beings, and so it itself is not a being, no-thing. It cannot be approached through a disengaged conceptual examination, but rather only from within historical life and the all-encompassing experience of being which constitutes our existence. In order to capture the pre-theoretical sense we all have of what it means to be, Heidegger embarks on a transcendental project outlining the ontological structures and preconditions of the entity of which its being is a concern to it and is at stake, namely, Dasein, the being we are. As it is well known, in the general reception of Heidegger's philosophy the concretization of the ontological inquiry through the Dasein analytic generated a misguided tendency to regard him as an existentialist. Heidegger repeatedly denounces this attribution: "It was never my idea to preach an 'existentialist philosophy'", he exclaims. "Rather, I have been concerned with renewing the question of *ontology* – the most central question of western philosophy – the question of being" (GA 32, 18-9/ Heidegger, 1980, 13).[8] The existentialist perspective disregards something essential in Heidegger's philosophy: it restricts itself to the ontic concern of human existence, denying Heidegger's ontological purpose and interest in the meaning of being. It similarly ignores his claim that Dasein's essential characteristic is disclosedness, that is, that Dasein is the site through which entities show up *as* meaningful; Dasein is the portal into the question of being.

[8] Heidegger rejects the existentialist reading already in 1929 book on Kant and most famously in his *Letter on Humanism* (1946).

And yet, the existentialist perspective is dominant among the thinkers discussed in this study, and as such, it will repeatedly feature in our discussions.

What unfolds in the pages of *Sein und Zeit* is an overt attempt to provide an ontological anthropology bereft of crippling metaphysical assumptions and "residues of Christian theology" (SZ 230/ BT 272). And indeed, the myriad ontological features introduced in the Dasein analytic remain true to Heidegger's a-theistic methodology: withheld as a horizon of interpretation, God is not an 'always already' in Dasein's being-in-the-world. Dasein's world is *de-facto* godless; references to its possible being-from or -toward God are nowhere to be found. At the same time, it is difficult to overlook the fact that *Sein und Zeit* is fraught with theologically-impregnated notions. A number of examples will prove conducive to our discussion in the following chapters. Heidegger coins the term *Verfall*, a German rendering of Luther's *Corruptio*, denoting the irrevocability of the Fall, to indicate the default and inevitable fallenness and immersion of inauthentic Dasein in *das Man*, its impossibility to evade the uncanniness of its existence. The very idea of Dasein's as always already outside itself, fallen and absorbed in a homogenizing social force is a transposition of the Augustinian notion of the self as not- and outside-itself. The authenticating comportment toward Dasein's future, its being-toward-death [*Vorlaufen zum Tode*], uncoincidentally resembles Kierkegaard's 'sickness-towards-death' [*Krankheit zum Tode*] – a despair opposite to faith – which itself is almost a direct translation of Luther's *cursus ad mortem* (Wolfe, 2014, 87-8). Heidegger also speaks of a 'call of conscience' [*Gewissensruf*], a call that unveils Dasein's fallenness and urges it to take resolute hold of itself. This calling, with its resemblance to an epiphany or revelation, awakens Dasein from its existential forsakenness and gives rise to guilt or debt [*Schuld*], a theologically-charged term in itself, bespeaking Dasein's sense of existential indebtedness to its being-thrown-in-the-world.

While employing these notions of dogmatic origin, Heidegger nevertheless seeks to distance himself from their theological undertones and stresses the a-theistically ontological and hence neutral nature of his framework. As ontic, he reminds, theological determinations "must come back to the existential structures which we have set forth" (SZ 180/ BT 224). His (curiously minimal) treatment of Kierkegaard exhibits this dynamic well. The Danish thinker, a major influence on Heidegger's thought in its

formative years (GA 63, 30/ Heidegger, 1999a, 25), is commended for his penetrative examination of existential phenomena and categories, and his definitive vocabulary, such as Angst, retrieval, curiosity, 'crowd', the Moment, and others, is consistently utilizes.[9] Yet Heidegger insists that as a Christian theologian, Kierkegaard is restricted to the derivative sphere of the existentiell and alien to "the existential problematic", and hence falls short of significant philosophical contribution.[10] This strategy repeats itself throughout the treaties: ontological notions of discernible religious origin are formulized and deemed neutral by stressing the ontic character of theology in contrast to the non-committed character of fundamental ontology. In this way, Heidegger purportedly legitimizes his notions from a philosophical standpoint and frees them from what is otherwise taken to be a limited tradition of thought. Thus, unlike Luther's dogmatic *status corruptionis*, the notion of *verfallen* "makes no ontical assertion about the 'corruption of human Nature'", Heidegger explains,

> "[…] because the problematic of this interpretation is *prior* to any assertion about corruption or incorruption. Falling is conceived ontologically as a kind of motion. Ontically, we have not decided whether man is 'drunk with sin' and in the *status corruptionis*, whether he walks in the *status integritatis*, or whether he finds himself in an intermediate stage, the *status gratiae*" (SZ 179/ BT 224).

Likewise, the ontological condition of being-guilty "must be distinguished from the *status corruptionis* as understood in theology. Theology can find in Being-guilty, as existentially defined, an ontological condition for the factical possibility of such *status*" [SZ 306/ BT 354n1]. Heidegger then moves on to underscore the non-committed nature of his analytic:

> "The existential analysis of Being-guilty, proves nothing either *for* or *against* the possibility of sin. Taken strictly, it cannot even be said that the ontology of Dasein *of itself* leaves this possibility open; for this ontology, as a philosophical inquiry, 'knows' in principle nothing about sin" (ibid).

In this passage, as in others, Heidegger seeks to ratify ontology's non-interference with regards to theology. His success in doing so, however, is questionable. For the alleged impartiality appears dubious insofar as the assurance that being-guilty "proves nothing for or against the possibility of sin" is

[9] The role of Kierkegaard in Heidegger's thought is subject of much debate. See Van Buren (1994, 150-4, 166-76, 181-99); Caputo (1994, 60-92); McCarthy (2011); Huntington (1995); Disse (2002); Wolfe (2014, 71-5).
[10] Cf. (SZ 190n6, 235n6, 338n3/ BT 492, 494, 497); Heidegger (1985, 292).

immediately contradicted by the *exclusion* of sin from the realm of ontology, as conveyed in statement that ontology "knows in principle nothing about sin".

Secularization in *Sein und Zeit*

In *Sein und Zeit* notions of theistic origin are relocated from their traditional context and stripped of their religious content in the process of ontological formalization. Some of these are identifiable due to their Christian etymological lineage, while others can be traced to Heidegger's early reflections on religious texts and themes through conceptual genealogy. Heidegger's project thus rests on a conundrum: on the one hand, it attempts to reconceive Dasein in terms of its facticity and temporality in a manner divested of, and as an alternative to, Christian anthropology. On the other hand, it evidently is determined by formally indicated Christian experiences and categories, which are de-theologized and re-introduced as neither religious or non-religious but rather ontological and hence universally applicable structures.[11] While Heidegger stands firm that the secularized categories employed in *Sein und Zeit* reflect formal and utterly non-committed ontological structures (Streeter, 1997), it is difficult to deny that his preceding theological interests set the tone for his 'secular' phenomenological efforts. Indeed, while applied in the secular Dasein analytic, Heidegger's most fundamental theoretical framing and content are pervasively impacted by the profundity of his encounter with Christianity.

The de-contextualization and extraction of religious content in *Sein und Zeit* consists of both formation and deformation. For example, Heidegger's secularized rendition of the Christian doctrine of the postlapsarian *status corruptionis* in the description of Dasein's *Verfall* and *Geworfenheit* retains the structure of permanence and the constitutive modality of lostness, of one's existence being beyond one's control (Mulhall, 2005, 46-84). However, omitted is the notion of a fall from a primordial and pristine state as well as its attachment to sin and its unquestionable negative undertone. Similarly, Dasein's secularized being-guilty is removed from the theological connotation of transgression, although it draws on a predetermined understanding that being-guilty labels a distinct manner of being and that it is a primal basis of Dasein's being reflecting a fundamental and inexpiable privation or debt unrelated and

[11] On the theological roots of 'formal indication', see Dahlstrom (1994).

prior to any action or behaviour (Coyne, 2015, 144-56). Additionally, in the de-theologized configuration of the disposition of Dasein's being-toward-death, the 'end' towards which Dasein's future-oriented life unfolds is not the second coming of Christ, but rather the nothingness of Dasein's death. God and faith have no role in Dasein's authenticity. Upended, moreover, is the link between death and sin so fundamental to Christian tradition. And yet, the eschatological disposition, the futural anticipation toward 'last things', is preserved.

The immanentism that features Heidegger's conception of phenomenology also plays a role in this context, as it cuts categories of their implicit appeal to what is beyond phenomenological givennness. This is apparent, for example, in the notion of the 'call of conscience'. Aware that it invites an analogy with the divine call, Heidegger accentuates that "In conscience Dasein calls itself". The call does not erupt from without, but rather summons from within. "'It' calls", yet this 'It' is immanent to Dasein: "The call comes *from* me and yet *from beyond me*" [SZ 275/ BT 320]. This is likewise underscored by the explicit attribution of transcendence, not to God, but to Dasein. In the introduction to *Sein und Zeit* Dasein is said to be "simply transcendent" [*transcendens schlechthin*]. By ignoring vertical transcendence and endorsing a certain account of horizontal transcendence, Heidegger aims to counteract Husserl's 'transcendence in immanence' as the intentionality of the subjective ego's consciousness, but he also clearly targets the traditional Christian-metaphysical notion of transcendence pertaining to a supersensory, other-worldly ultimate being. For Heidegger, transcendence is "what is unique to *human Dasein*" as being-in-the-world and as that which serves as 'the open' in which beings are disclosed as intelligible. "To *be* a subject", he maintains, "means to be a being in and as transcendence" (GA 9, 138). In the lecture "What is Metaphysics" (1930), Heidegger ties transcendence with Nothing, noting: "if [Dasein] were not in advance holding itself out into the nothing, then it could never adopt a stance toward beings nor even toward itself" (GA 9, 115/ Heidegger, 1998, 91). Transcendence is thus not a-temporal or other-worldly, but rather immanent and thoroughly temporal, within the confinement of *finis* (SZ §69; Dahlstrom, 2005; Moran, 2014).

That Heidegger resorts to theological terminology is striking, for he himself was of the view that secularization involves not only alteration but also preservation, and is therefore faulty. Already in

1923, he charges Descartes' formulation of the modern subject with de-theologization. "What was previously established in believing consciousness' understanding is here secularized [*säkularisiert*]", he writes (GA 17, 311/ Heidegger, 2005, 236).[12] In *Sein und Zeit* he reiterates that "in modern times, the Christian definition [of the human's being] has been de-theologized [*enttheologisiert*]" (SZ 49/BT 74).[13] From Heidegger's perspective, the fault in de-theologizing Christian conceptions is that it breaches the fundamental incommensurability of theology and philosophy, leading to a flawed portrayal of human existence stemming from "inadequate ontological foundations". Moreover, from early on Heidegger develops an understanding of philosophy as always leading to questions and of theology as always leading to answers. In his mind, theology cannot bring itself to pose the urgent philosophical questions with the appropriate radicalism without already assuming to possess the answers. It has too many previous commitments – to tradition, to revelation – that predetermine its inquiry from the outset and preclude a genuine inquiry. And yet, by resorting to vocabulary prefigured in religious texts and traditions and laden with theological meaning, Heidegger seems to be guilty of perpetuating these very faults.

On the other hand, Heidegger uses theistic notions because he believes that "all philosophical discussion, even the most radical attempt to begin all over again, is pervaded by traditional concepts and thus by traditional horizons and traditional angles of approach" (GA 24, 23/ Heidegger, 1982, 31). What he proposes, therefore, is a *destruction*, which he explains as "a critical process in which the traditional concepts, which at first must necessarily be employed, are deconstructed down to the sources from which they were drawn" (ibid). Dasein, and philosophy, are the product of their historical inheritance from the past, and stepping out of the conditioning of one's hermeneutic tradition is impossible. The only way forward is ineluctably through a very specific form of historical inquiry, which means it is through and by means of tradition. Heidegger thus sets out to go through and dismantle

[12] Earlier in this lecture course, in the context of Descartes's concept of human freedom, he similarly states that "Descartes transposes what is theologically designated as the working of God's grace to the relation of the intellect working on the will" (p. 156-57/116). Heidegger also points out that "Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel were theologians, and Kant can be understood only in terms of theology". These philosophers "come out of *theology* and take from it the basic impulses of their speculation. This theology is rooted in Reformation theology, which succeeded only to a very small extent in achieving a genuine explication of Luther's new basic religious position and of its immanent possibilities" (GA 61, 7/ Heidegger, 2001, 7).

[13] Translation amended.

the layers of impoverishing misconceptions handed down by Western ontology in order to allow for repressed past possibilities to shine forth onto the present. In recasting theologically-charged notions into purportedly non-committed ontological structures, Heidegger intends to radically rethink their traditional application and consequently disclose the primordial experience of factical life that gave rise to them in the first place.

The difficulty, however, lies in the tension between the recognition that one's historical situatedness and tradition dictate one's orientation, and the ambition for a radical *re*orientation from within that tradition. Indeed, this tension is manifested in the very idea of *Destruktion*, which is directed against traditional ontology but takes its cue from Luther's effort (inspired by his interpretation of Paul) in his "Heidelberg Disputation" (Luther, 1999) to destroy [*destruere*, *destructio*] the 'folly' of scholastic theology of glory. Heidegger makes the distinction between an inauthentic aprpaoch toward one's tradition, wherein tradition limits one's possibilities and weighs down on Dasein, and an authentic attitude approach wherein one's tradition is taken over as heritage, liberating Dasein to its possibilities (SZ 383/ BT 435). When considering this distinction, one must remember Heidegger's insistence that the authentic/inauthentic division is not a binary, since authenticity is a *modification* of inauthenticity. Dasein never exits the fallenness of its being in *Das Man*. In the context of one's relation to one's past, this means that while an authentic comportment towards one's past as heritage gives access to possibilities that seemed obscured at first, it still does not release Dasein from its determining trajectory.

The stakes, to be sure, are high. For insofar as crucial elements of Heidegger's philosophical project are implicitly predetermined by their theological roots, his claim for a strict separation between philosophy and theology is undermined. More critically, however, it means that the project he set out to accomplish in *Sein und Zeit* constantly runs the risk of short-circuiting itself for attempting to overcome a conceptual framework while relying upon that very framework. A further point that will figure largely in the context of Heidegger's Jewish receptions, as we shall see, is that the dependence on the conceptuality of a particular religious tradition undercuts in no small manner the aspiration for a universal application of its analysis.

Heidegger's Later Works

Relatively soon after its publication, and despite its massive popularity, Heidegger came to identify shortcomings in *Sein und Zeit*. In his famous later remarks in *Letter on Humanism* on the so-called 'turn' [*Kehre*] in his thought, Heidegger dubs the views that approaching the human being "as if it were the secularized transference to human beings of a thought that Christian theology expresses about God" - "the ultimate error" (GA 9, 327/ Heidegger, 1998, 249). Implying that he himself has fallen prey to this illicit tendency, he ascribes the failure of his early endeavors to, *inter alia*, the "help of the language of metaphysics" (250; cf. Richardson, 2003). Indeed, as he later states in "On Time and Being", the metaphysical tradition of thought binds us in such a way that the very act of overcoming it inherently participates in a metaphysical discourse, and hence preserves it. Thus, rather than perpetuating that which is being exited, metaphysics should be 'left alone' (Heidegger, 1972, 70). In its oblivion of the difference between being and beings, it severely falls short. From the beginning of the 1930s, in any event, Heidegger reframes his path of thinking. Instead of producing an outline of a systematic account of the meaning of being in general, what increasingly come to the fore in his writings are the place of language, the difference [*Differenz*] between beings and being, and what he calls the technological configuration of truth. The notion of Dasein's historicity is expanded to a *Seinsgeschichte*, a deeply eschatological sketch of the historical unfolding of different manners of essencing or world disclosures throughout the course of Western thought. Yet this reframing should not be exaggerated. There is much indication that the much mythologized 'turn' in Heidegger's thinking – an alleged break between Heidegger I and Heidegger II - is overstated, if, at all, it even denotes a movement in Heidegger's thought in the first place (Bernasconi, 1985, 66; Hemming, 2002; Malpas, 2006, 147-209). While the attempt to rearticulate the thought about being involves at times a critical engagement with the project of *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger's early work constitutes the philosophical backbone and context for his later thinking; the latter grows out of the former.

Whatever which way one may interpret the *Kehre*, for the present concern it is important to recognize that also later, Heidegger's views regarding the status and role of theology vis-à-vis philosophy remain largely unchanged. Continuing to insist on the uncommitted character of his thought, he confirms in 1946 that in ontology "nothing is decided about the 'existence of God' or his 'non-being', no more than

about the possibility or impossibility of gods" (GA 9, 350/ Heidegger, 1998, 266). In 1951 he reaffirms the decision to barricade God outside philosophical reflection and the strict separation between faith and thinking, with an explicit evocation of Luther.

> "God and being are not identical and I would never attempt to think the essence of God by means of being […] If I were yet to write a theology, something that appeals to me at times, then the word *Being* would not appear in it. Faith does not need the thought of Being. When faith has recourse to this thought, it is no longer faith. This is what Luther understood […] One could not be more reserved than I before every attempt to employ Being to think theologically in what God is God. Of Being, there is nothing to expect here. I believe that Being can never be thought as the ground and essence of God, but that nevertheless the experience of God and of his manifestedness, to the extent that the latter can indeed meet man, flashes in the dimension of Being, which in no way signifies that Being might be regarded as a possible predicate for God" (GA 15, 436-7; quoted in Marion, 1991, 61-2).

In a similar manner, in a 1964 statement to a convention of American theologians dedicated, to a large degree, to the productivity of his thought to theology, Heidegger reinforces "the positive task of theology, viz., to discuss, within its own bounds, the bounds of the Christian faith, and out of faith's very essence, what it has to think and what it has to speak" (Heidegger 1976, 30).[14] Pressing that there is no intersection between God and being - God is no being, being is not God - circumvents what Heidegger terms onto-theology, the unholy alliance of metaphysics and theology (Thomson, 2000; Hanley, 1999). In the ontotheological tradition of metaphysics, God assumes the most prominent role in the metaphysical structure of reality, operating as the supreme and ground of being, the *Causa sui* upon which the entire structure is based. Among the onto-theologists, Heidegger lists Aristotle, Leibnitz, Kant, Hegel - the paradigmatic example of ontotheology - and even Nietzsche, who signalled towards its overcoming but nevertheless succumbed to it. In Heidegger's understanding, the onto-theological god is a present-at-hand being, conceptualized, objectifiable, and available. This manner of thought perpetuates the original sin of western thought: the forgetfulness of being [*Seinsvergessenheit*]. "Theologians", Heidegger postulates, "discuss the being-est of all beings [*das Seiendste alles Seienden*], so that it never occurs to them to think about Being itself" (GA 7, 260). While the onto-theological critique can be - and has been – embraced by theologians wishing to retrieve the 'living God of Abraham' from the abstractions of the 'god of the philosophers', for Heidegger, it is categorically

[14] The statement was read *in absentia*. This conference at Drew University became famous due to the lecture of Hans Jonas, the keynote speaker standing in for Heidegger, which was a surprising attack on his former mentor.

philosophical. It pertains to the constitution of metaphysics, that is, to the inadequately doubled manner of posing the question of the being of beings - "What is being in general as a being?" and "Which being is the highest being and in what sense is it the highest being?" (GA 9, 449/Heidegger, 1973, 10-1). That said, it is important to notice that the onto-theological critique holds strong ties, as a philosophical re-appropriation, of the Luther-inspired, anti-*theologia gloria* impulse of his early years.[15]

It is important to bear in mind Heidegger's attempt to think beyond the nihilism of metaphysics and traditional faith when one comes across the many deeply religious terms in his later writings. Due to an intense wrestling with Hölderlin's poetry and Nietzsche, Heidegger begins to speak of the 'the Holy' which makes possible the appearance of cryptical 'gods'. These, too, are secularized terms that do not denote what traditional religion indicates by holiness and God, which, as Heidegger repeatedly reminds, are accessible only through faith (Haar, 1989).[16] Rather, with this religiously couched language, Heidegger wishes to contemplate and cultivate what may be considered a genuinely religious comportment to being, marked by a sensitivity to the richness of meaning and openness to the elevated aspect of being. The modern person, he claims, has become increasingly blind to this dimension of holiness because of an objectifying technological disclosure of being, the *Ge-stell*, that presently holds sway. The present age is characterized by a lack of the divine; it is 'between the times', between the flight of the old gods and the emergence of new gods. Heidegger perceived his own thought as preparatory to the coming of these new gods and to a new mode of beings' unconcealment. As he maintains: "The godless thinking […] is thus closer to the divine God. Here this means only: godless thinking is more open to Him than onto-theo-logic would like to admit" (GA 11, 77/ Heidegger 1969b, 72).

Animating Heidegger's desire to overcome this impasse and reintroduce a new attunement to the holy is the following reasoning: insofar as Plato absolutized the unconcealment of the propositional conception of truth as 'correctness' - taking philosophy "on an erroneous and fateful course" (GA 34,

[15] Consider, for instance, Pöggeler's claim (1987, 265) that Heidegger's increasing distancing from his theological origins "signified a radicalization rather than a turning away from theolog

[16] The view that Heidegger and Christianity are compatible is offered, among many, by Hemming (2002) and Armitage (2014).

17) - and Aristotle prioritised the restricted understanding of being as presence, then setting a non-metaphysical thinking into motion requires a retreat to the primordial Greek thought of the Pre-Socratics, which was obscured and concealed by the Platonic and Aristotelian breakthroughs.[17] In his investigations into the inception of thought in Parmenides and Heraclitus and attempt to make overt what the ancient Greeks only tacitly recognized, Heidegger seeks to ponder about the way concealment and unconcealment happens, that is, about the anonymous event of being 'showing-up' and its relation to temporality and the orderings of cultural practices. According to Heidegger, a restorative and creative encounter with the first inception of thought in ancient Greece is part of his eschatological vision of an 'other beginning'.

As before, while overtly steering away from the secularized Christian determinations of *Sein und Zeit*, a strategy of de-theologization is discernible in his later thinking as well. As Emmanuel Levinas, who will be discussed in chapter 7, points out in a 1975 lecture course on 'Death and Time': "there are many Christian virtues in the 'Pre-Socratic' being (generosity, modesty, humility, etc.), and Heidegger's teaching would have it that these structures or these virtues have a root in being itself". In a lecture series 'God and Onto-theo-logy' from the same year, Levinas repeats this judgment: "the 'being' of the pre-Socratics would be close to a biblical, and singularly Christian, conception" (Levinas, 2000, 30-1, 136).

It is suggestive to recall that at first, Heidegger searches for the remedy for Greek metaphysics outside the Greek tradition, in the early Christian texts. But while the possibility of 'Jerusalem' offering a genuine avenue of thought is at first entertained, it is then conclusively closed off. Instead Heidegger now decides to delve *deeper* into the Greeks to retrieve a primordial and more genuinely 'Greek' manner of thinking (White, 2005).

There is a political aspect to Heidegger's attraction to the Greeks. Heidegger believes that the historical-spiritual mission of preparing the revolution in thought is endowed by being to the German *Volk*, the modern inheritor of ancient Greece. His enthusiastic welcoming of National Socialism is intrinsically

[17] Although Heidegger later retracts this interpretation of Plato (1964, 70).

tied to this philosophical-historical-eschatological persuasion. As he makes clear in his rectorial address on occasion of his Nazi-sponsored inauguration as the rector of the Freiburg University:

> "Only when we submit to the power of the *beginning* of our spiritual-historical being [*Dasein*]. This beginning is the breakout [*Aufbruch*] of Greek philosophy. That is when, from the culture of one Volk and by the power of that Volk's language, Western man rises up for the first time against *the totality of what is* and questions it and comprehends it as the being that it is" (Wolin, 1993, 31).[18]

Heidegger's relatively speedy disillusionment from political hope soon gave way to a more receptive comportment toward the eventual deliverance from the quicksand-like framework of technological calculativity and efficiency. Ultimately, Heidegger proposes a 'letting be' or releasement [*Gelassenheit*] of will with regards to the epochal technological sway in preparatory anticipation for a future redemptive intervention. As he somewhat obscurely states: "only a god could save us".

Some Early Christian Receptions of Heidegger

As we shall see in the following chapters, the conceptual terms of Heidegger's twentieth century Jewish receptions are set up in the philosophical, theological and political climate of interwar Germany. For this reason, examining some early Christian reactions to *Sein und Zeit* can shed light on how contemporary readers perceived its intersections with religion and theology and offer a useful contextualization.

From the very beginning, the early readership of *Sein und Zeit* was attuned to its theological resonances and read it as a paragon of *Existenzphilosophie*. For example, Husserl, after finally studying the work, attributes his student's diversion from his own ideal of phenomenology as rigorous science to Heidegger "never having freed himself completely from his theological prejudices" (Cairns, 1976, 9).[19] Hinting at the unresolved role of theology in this work, the young Sidney Hook, who published his observations from a year of studying philosophy in Germany, writes: "one closes the book with a feeling that it could only have been written by a pagan philosopher with a Christian's sense of original sin" (1930, 155). Max Scheler also inquires: "Aren't these the gloomy old theologoumena of Calvinist origin (cf. also

[18] Translation amended.

[19] A moment in the Jewish reception of Heidegger that will not be discussed in the present study pertains to the Jewish origin of his mentor, Husserl, and the personal, philosophical, religious, and political aspects of their troubled relationship. I discuss this in my forthcoming essay "The Husserl-Heidegger Relationship in the Jewish Imagination".

'thrownness'), which are here translated into an apparently pure ontological language?" He also points out that the concentration on human 'dread' is deeply conditioned by the definition of man as put forth by "Christianity and Judaism" – "and furthermore that this dread has emerged in a very peculiar and strong way in Protestantism" (1981, 135, 143). Also Werner Brock, Heidegger's Jewish assistant, lists in 1935 "the Christian experience of thinkers like Augustine and Kierkegaard" as among the central influences on Heidegger's thought, and likens Heidegger's approach to the history of philosophy to "the way in which an independent and thoughtful, though devout, Christian might read the Bible" (1935, 109-111). In his survey of contemporary philosophy at the time, Fritz Heinemann duly notes the particularly Protestant heritage that is present in Heidegger's work. He identifies of the overall religious undertones of *Existenzphilosophie*, which draws upon "the entire framework of Pauline Christianity, Paul himself, Augustine, Luther" to develop the particularly Lutheran themes of individualism, interiority, and conscience, and points out that Kierkegaard's framework "develops in the fullness of its historical-religious concretion the deepest wellspring that nourishes the Heideggerian view of existence and his anthropology" (Heinemann, 1929, 373). Likewise, Heinemann judges that Heidegger's portrayal of Dasein is the outcome of an integration of a secularized Kierkegaard and Dilthey, wherein "the Pauline-Kierkegaardian suffering sinful, guilty, human living in fear and trembling becomes a historical being fixed in time and not separate from it" (374). Yet unlike Kierkegaard, for Heidegger the main question is not "how can a person become a Christian again, but: how can a human become a human again?" (373). Heidegger's anthropology is secularized, and thus "the major problem is that man is not understood out of nature as he was by the Greeks, nor out of God, as in the middle ages, but out of himself" (375). In another survey of present-day philosophical trends, Siegfried Marck maintains that *Existenzphilosophie* "reaches its highpoint and receives it comprehensive formulation" in Heidegger's scheme, which "erupts as a religious or political system" (Marck, 1929, 1931, 144; Ernst, 1933; Droege, 1938).

It is of little surprise, therefore, that *Sein und Zeit* almost immediately elicited great interest and provoked debates among its religiously-minded readers (Wolfe, 2014, 151-208; Baring, 2015a; Williams, 1977, 7-47; Schaeffler, 1978; Raffelt, 2011). Central moments in these debates pertained to

the significance and weight of its residual secularized theological notions, to the godlessness of the portrayal of Dasein, to the theological ramifications of Heidegger's methodological a-theism, and to the relationship between philosophy and theology more generally. The present survey shall touch upon all these themes succinctly, but in order to best prepare us for the discussion of Heidegger's Jewish receptions, its main concern will be the question whether Heidegger's ontology is prior to and independent of theological assumptions, or whether it implicitly reflects and promotes a theological programme.

It is best to begin with Rudolf Bultmann, an associate of the dialectical theology circle, a friend and colleague of Heidegger's at Marburg, and a key figure in the latter's early Christian reception (Dennison, 2008, 132-40; Gadamer, 1994b, 29-43). Bultmann is often charged for naïvely appropriating Heidegger's philosophy for the development of an existentialist theology, although his relation to Heidegger is more complex than usually acknowledged (Congdon, 2017). One thing, however, is clear: Bultmann accepts Heidegger's claim for theological neutrality and the ontic/ontological distinction undergirding it. The analysis of Dasein, he agrees, is purely formal - it "has neither *weltanschauliche* nor theological intentions" (Bultmann, 1928, 1687-1688, quoted in Baring, 2015a, 68). As such, its fruitfulness for theology is to be judged according to the merit of its analysis of human existence. And since, according to Bultmann, "all of the basic Christian concepts have content that can be determined ontologically prior to faith", then one finds in Heidegger "approaches that are useful for an ontological foundation of Christian theology as a science" (Bultmann, 1960, 96). This allows one to see that the ontic Christian notions of sin, love, and creatureliness are factual instances, acknowledged within faith, of the ontological notions of guilt, care and thrownness, respectively. Likewise, the Heideggerian authentic/inauthentic structure of Dasein's being informs the Christian existential task of salvation. The existential modification from a fallen and lost being to authenticity is the ontological preunderstanding [*Vorverständnis*] of the transition, made possible by the advent of Christ, from *Welt-bleiben*, a sinful existence fallen away from God, to the authenticity of life in faith, *Nicht-Welt-Sein*. Implementing Heidegger's 'existential' terminology to the 'existentiell' call to faith, Bultmann asserts that receptivity to the message of Christ is engendered by the terror of awareness of finitude. The acknowledgment of

temporality brings about the inner transmutation of rebirth - represented by the cross and resurrection – that enables the departure from a sinful life to a life of faith. Bultmann, who adheres to a philosophically-informed theology whose autonomy as the language of faith is nevertheless safeguarded, is quoted as saying: "I learned from [Heidegger] not what theology has to say but how it has to say it" (Thiselton, 1980, 28). Bultmann was, of course, well aware of Heidegger's background in theology and the religious sources of many of his categories. Indeed, he claims that Heidegger's "existentialist analysis of the ontological structure of being would seem to be no more than a secular, philosophical version of the New Testament view of human existence" (ibid, 24). However, conceding that Heidegger outlines the underlying pre-Christian ontological foundation of existence, Bultmann maintains that one should be "startled that philosophy is saying, independently, the same thing that the New Testament is saying" (Bultmann, 1961, 25). As we shall see, this Bultmannian link between Heideggerian existential analysis and biblical hermeneutics will be latently taken up and debated by the thinkers discussed in the following chapters.

The basis of Bultmann's constructive engagement with Heidegger's philosophy is the acceptance of its formal character. However, the fact that Bultmann is fiercely rebuked by his fellow theologians for his utilization of Heidegger demonstrates how controversial this assumption is. Unlike Bultmann, most Christian theologians at the time, Protestant and Catholic alike, read *Sein und Zeit* as a secularized programme reflecting and made possible by particular theological traditions. According to some Protestant readings, the godlessness of Dasein, whose existential possibilities are confined to the insurmountable immanent horizon of facticity and finitude, depicts the human being *before* revelation. Accordingly, the entire analysis of Dasein amounts to a snapshot of a godforsaken existence. Since divine revelation alone is the condition of possibility of existential redemption, Heidegger's programme as a whole is situated within the realm of inauthenticity. For some, this godforsaken depiction gives philosophical voice to the present-day resurgence of theological attitudes accentuating the breach between the radically transcendent God and the fallen, sinful world. Heidegger's bracketing of God and resulting godless world corresponds, from the perspective of philosophy, to the position of *Deus absconditus* looming large over the theological scene in the Weimar period (Bambach, 1995, 189-203).

This position found its quintessential articulation in Karl Barth's exegesis of Paul's *Römerbrief* (1919, 1922), which spurred the consolidation of the most impactful (if short-lived) theological movement in Germany of the 1920s, dialectical theology. To be sure, there is much that divides Heidegger the philosopher and Barth the theologian. Yet their shared Protestant heritage and especially the important mark of Kierkegaard's 'infinite qualitative difference' on both men generated the view that Heidegger's philosophical a-theism is in fact closer to Barth's theological theism than may first appear (the Jewish perspective on the Heidegger-Barth connection will be taken up in chapter 3).[20] One propagator of the claim that dialectical theology and Heidegger's atheism are not oppositions but rather share a continuum is Karl Löwith, whose interpretation of Heidegger as a secularized, post-Christian thinker has been massively influential. Löwith advanced the view that there is a "concrete 'relation' between existential ontology and dialectical theology" (Löwith, 1930a, 36; 1930b; Koepp, 1930; Wittkemper, 1938, 644-55). For him, Heidegger's atheism is not alien to the tenets of Protestantism, but rather derives from implicit secular impulses within that very tradition.

Most dialectical theologians firmly rejected both Heidegger's philosophy and its purported affiliation with the Barthian project (Barth, 1929, 511-2; Kuhlmann, 1929). For them, inasmuch as a strict separation between theology and philosophy is upheld and revelation provides all that is worth knowing about human existence, philosophy as such, and especially one so deeply marred in history and human experience as Heidegger's, is at best of no interest and at worst perilous. In Heidegger's atheistic portrayal, Dasein's lack of being-toward-God reflects not only its ignorance of revelation as an eruptive existential event, but its fundamental impenetrability to the novelties of revelation. Heidegger offers then not the structure of a pre-faithful person, but of a non-faithful person. Barth's mindful avoidance of Heidegger is the flip side of other theologians' vocal critique of the philosopher.[21] While Bultmann links the Heideggerian authentic/inauthentic distinction to the distinction between graced and ungraced existence, and claims the former is the ontological precondition of the latter, Barth rejects Heidegger's

[20] As Safranski put it, "Heidegger's 'bracketed-in' God probably resembled Karl Barth's God" (1999, 111).

[21] Barth's silence regarding Heidegger characterizes at least this early stage of his thought. He famously - and erroneously - equates Heidegger and Sartre as two atheist existentialists in *Church Dogmatics* III, 3 (1961, 334-49.

framework as a whole in favour of the Christian distinction. To add to Heidegger's inadequacies, the ontological nature of his thought exhibited problematic residues of natural theology. Heidegger's a-theism, then, is hardly neutral, and his programme should be rejected "not only because it is atheistic", as Emil Brunner warns (1931, 122), "but also because it is secretly theological".

A dominant strand in Heidegger's early Catholic reception is also concerned with unmasking the theological presuppositions and implications of his work. Initially, Heidegger's preoccupation with ontology and its traditional categories of essence and existence was perceived as bearing thematic and methodological semblance to Scholastic philosophy, thereby purportedly affirming the much-needed return to 'traditional' philosophy after Kant's fatal attack on ontology. That the monograph on Duns Scotus (Thomas of Erfurt) was Heidegger's only published work to date fostered the expectation that *Sein und Zeit* will continue the scholastic path (Wolfe, 2014, 174). However, from the Catholic perspective, Heidegger's evident Protestant assumptions make his ontology woefully flawed. Implicitly repudiating the account of the human being as *imago dei*, the presence of Luther hovers over Heidegger's philosophy. In a manner predating Jean-Luc Marion's claim (1991, 43) that the "suspension of God" in Heidegger's methodological atheism generates "idolatry", early Catholic readers insist that the aspiration to delineate the conditions of possibility of human existence without direct reference to God will unavoidably result in distortion. From the Neo-Scholastic perspective, Heidegger's a-theistic account is by implication atheistic. Thus, while lauding the reappearance of "the Aristotelian-Thomist doctrine of Being as foundational *prima philosophia*" as a positive return to traditional-scholastic way of philosophizing, the Jesuit philosopher Erich Przywara makes clear that unlike this tradition, 'being' in Heidegger's scheme remains planted in the imminent world and does not point to transcendence (Przywara, 1928, 252).[22] Heidegger is occupied with *Leben-Sein* or *Existenz-Sein,* which is more "an Aristotelianization of Dilthey" than an actual "revival of Aristotle". In his untraditional return to tradition, Heidegger "frames the concept of being in such a way that […] the inner-worldly is closed and locked in on itself, since being as being is in its essence 'in the world'. At

[22] Przywara here echoes a view already expressed by Heidegger's student Oscar Becker (Pöggeler, 2009, 77) who perceived Heidegger's turn to being as "a new Scholasticization".

the same time, the supra-worldly falls away by itself or at least must be traced back to the immanent." Heidegger thus advances a covert theological position, one which establishes a perilous dualism between God and world, divine transcendence and human immanence. In his 1934 *Augustinus*, Przywara speaks of Heidegger in terms of gnostic manichaeanism. The dualism characteristic of Protestant theology as a whole and radicalized by Karl Barth, he proclaims, is guilty of driving God completely out of human sphere. Elsewhere Przywara equates Barth and Heidegger for promoting an either/or paradigm between heaven and earth, when the one-sided transcendence offered by the former and the one-sided immanence offered by the latter are two sides of the same coin (1929a, 30). Both, like Nietzsche's atheism, manifest the logical outcome of Lutheranism - "the most refined form of worldliness and paganism" (ibid, 71). Alongside his critique, Przywara develops a theological corrective to Heidegger by formulating an analysis of Dasein's being-toward-God, drawing on Patristic and Scholastic ontology (Przywara, 1931; 1955, 55ff). By emphasizing the creatureness of the human being and the existential openness toward God, he seeks to arrive at an account of a religious Dasein who leads a life in which the transcendent divine is 'in us and above us' ["*Gott in uns und über uns"*] (Przywara, 1923).

The stark polarity between God and the finite man, argues Przywara, spawns a tragic form of existence. What surfaces from Heidegger's philosophy is the urgency of man's ultimate decision between Nothingness, upon which Heidegger's structure is founded, and God (Przywara, 1930). Developing this point, the Jesuit theologian Alfred Delp opines that Dasein's authentic resolve is "heroism of Nothing", tragically established on an abyss (Delp, 1931; 1933). Heidegger, according to Delp, offers a distorted account of *analogia attributionis* in which not God but Nothingness serves as the *analogans* of man's being. This tragic heroism is self-contradictory, because by claiming that meaning and transcendence are derived from the finite spirit of Dasein, Heidegger commits the all-too-modern sin of ascribing secularized quasi-divine attributions to the human being. Just like God, whose essence and existence are identical – *deus, cuius essential est ipsummet suum esse*, in Aquinas's formulation - Heidegger writes of Dasein: "The 'essence' of Dasein lies in its existence" (SZ 42/ BT 67). In Heidegger, a banished God is replaced by a deified Dasein, generating a pagan, immanent ontology. In the end, Delp

grieves, "the tragedy of this ethos of our day is that this courage is ultimately just a big illusion, without ground and content" (1930, 83).[23]

Heidegger, of course, opposes these confessional readings of his thought, and in a letter to Elisabeth Blochmann he explicitly objects to what he sees as Löwith's false claims that his philosophy is a "disguised theology [*verkappte Theologie*]" (1989, 103). What emerges from this survey, however, is that Bultmann serves as the exception that proves the rule: Despite their diverging outlooks, Protestant and Catholic theologians alike find Heidegger's system to be theologically inflected, and it is generally agreed that his fundamental ontology does not describe Dasein as *vorglauben* but as *unglauben*.

End Note

In his 1959 "A Dialogue on Language", Heidegger confesses: "Without this theological start, I would never have come onto the path of thought. But origin always remains future [*Herkunft aber bleibt stets Zukunft*]" (GA 12, 91/ Heidegger, 1971, 10). This statement testifies to Heidegger's acknowledgment of the complicated relation his philosophy holds with his Christian upbringing and early theological reflections. As we have seen, this complication is recognized by the first generation of Heidegger's Christian readers, who predominantly rejected his claim for theological neutrality, both in terms of the presuppositions and the ramifications of the existential analysis in *Sein und Zeit*. As we shall see in the upcoming chapters, a similar recognition and rejection is recorded by its Jewish readers as well.

[23] In her later expositional essay "What is Existential Philosophy?" Hannah Arendt restates the reading of Dasein bearing the attributes of a secularized God and reaches similar conclusions (1994, 177-80). Jacob Taubes (1952, 662) suggests translating Dasein into *homo absconditus*, while acknowledging and rejecting the analogy to *deus absconditus* and the suggestion that it is a mere secularization of the original theological notion. As to the question whether "man is his own source?" Taubes responds: "to this question Heidegger fails to give an answer".

Chapter 2: Kant's Legacy and New Thinking: Heidegger, Cassirer, and Rosenzweig

Introduction

When *Sein und Zeit* appeared, it was hardly an isolated work of philosophy. Self-consciously rebellious, it operated within a highly charged set of assumptions, values, and views in a crisis-laden cultural context in which philosophy, theology, and politics were tensely intertwined. As noted in the introduction, the world it rebelled against was, *inter alia*, represented by the philosophical idealism of the Neo-Kantian schools that had increasingly lost their appeal in the minds of many younger students. Significantly, the majority of German Jews at the time adhered to the very worldview Heidegger and his philosophy challenged. From their perspective, Heidegger represented the crisis of the enlightenment's liberal and humanist values which they saw as their own. On the other hand, the younger generation of Jewish intellectuals sought to shake off the devitalizing legacy of the enlightenment and embrace a more existential and expressive mode of thinking. In this respect, there was much they shared with Heidegger, and his framework could be seen, at least *prima facie*, as an ally to their effort of revitalizing Jewish existence.

The present chapter aims to sketch out the contours of early Jewish responses to the emergence of Heidegger onto the intellectual scene through the prism of the divided cultural and intellectual landscape of Weimar. It takes as its departure point the battle raging at the time over the legacy of Emmanuel Kant. By analysing the famous Davos encounter between Ernst Cassirer and Heidegger, the chapter attends to specific political and theological resonances of the encounter with respect to the heated debate over the ties between *Judentum* and *Deutschtum*. Particular attention is given to Cassirer's interpretation of Heidegger as a propagator of myth and enemy of the liberal order, as I claim that this response can be taken as representative of the way in which the majority of German Jews judged Heidegger at the time. The chapter then shifts to discuss Franz Rosenzweig, a representative of the younger generation, who proposed a controversial interpretation of Davos by announcing Heidegger's perspective to be akin to his own 'new thinking'. Following this, the chapter charts the response to Rosenzweig's affiliation with Heidegger and traces the tendency to repudiate this link.

Davos and the Quarrel over Kant's Anthropology

Martin Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer, arguably Germany's two most prominent philosophers at the time, met and debated each other in an annual conference on Kant at the picturesque Swiss resort in Davos in 1929 (Gordon, 2010; Carman, 2010; Schalow, 1996; Schrag, 1967; Lynch, 1990; Cristaudo, 1991; Waite, 1998; Meyer, 2006).[24] On the face of it, their discussion revolved around rather technical issues pertaining to the basic structures of human understanding according to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. As is well known, Kant strictly distinguishes between the mind's receptive passive capacity of sensibility (intuition) and the spontaneous active capacity of understanding (concepts). Both, Kant claims, are needed for objects of empirical experience to be given the phenomenal and logical form of entities. "Thought without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind", as Kant put it (2003, 92). Yet this dualism was often criticized for presupposing an unprovable and metaphysically independent thing-in-itself that is intuited. Cassirer, representing the steadily declining Marburg Neo-Kantian school, follows Cohen's interpretation of downplaying the role of intuition and highlighting the spontaneity of human understanding. On his account, Kant provides a vision of the human subject as a free and creative agent whose spontaneity allows it to construct reality. Heidegger's reading of the First Critique, on the other hand, stresses the receptive and utterly temporal character of human cognition. "Finite knowledge is non-creative intuition", he asserts (GA 3, 25-26/ Heidegger, 1990, 18). The departure point for Heidegger's conception of receptivity is Dasein's everydayness in-the-world and *Geworfenheit*. If Cassirer offers an optimistic account of selfhood marked by autonomy, sovereignty, and independence, Heidegger puts forth a model of subjectivity predicated on receptivity, dependence, and limitedness. On this more pessimistic account, human beings are inextricably bound to, and fatefully determined by, the contingency of the context to which they have been thrown. In a reading of Kant that will soon be fleshed out in his *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger insists that the receptivity and primordial temporality implied in *Geworfenheit* is deeper than the Kantian distinction between sensuous passivity and conceptual spontaneity. Undergirding them but also

[24] Prior to their meeting in Davos, Heidegger had already mentioned Cassirer's *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* in his 1925 lecture series and had written a review of the second volume of that work in 1928. Cassirer refers to *Sein und Zeit* in the third volume of his aforementioned work. He also reviewed Heidegger's Kant book in 1931 and engaged philosophically with Heidegger's political agenda in his posthumous 1946 *The Myth of the State*. On this, see below.

suppressed *by* them, it denotes that we are fundamentally "overwhelmed" by or delivered over to the factical world that presses upon us. Not our cognitive faculties but rather unreflective moods and attunements are our most basic affordances towards being. Heidegger also attempts to undercut Kant's rationalist foundation by claiming to expose the insight that 'imagination' is the mysterious 'common root' of understanding and sensibility that Kant hinted at – though he also argues that Kant backed-off from this insight, keeing it 'unsaid'. In Cassirer's account, the Kantian rationalistic subject possesses unrestricted creative intellectual power and therefore also the ability to overcome the limitations of its finitude and arrive at objective knowledge which is not time-bound. From Heidegger's perspective, the intrinsically finite character of human existence and knowledge reveals Neo-Kantian (and Husserlian) projections of a-temporal knowledge and ego to be suffused with illicit traditional metaphysics. Taking Kant's insistence on the essential limitation of human thought seriously, Heidegger asserts, one arrives at "the destruction of the former foundation of Western metaphysics (spirit, logos, reason)" which he himself is carrying out in his fundamental ontology (GA 3, 245/ Heidegger, 1990, 171). Kant was less concerned with scientific knowledge, Heidegger announces, than with outlining the foundations for a metaphysical ontology.

Thus, while focused on Kant, the Davos encounter was in fact a debate over the essence of human being and the nature of philosophy. Significantly, it unfolded as a quarrel between the 'old' Neo-Kantianism and the 'new' *Existenz* thinking. Indeed, Heidegger explicitly attacked Cohen's Neo-Kantianism through Cassirer, Cohen's student. It should be noted, however, that while the Marburg school had an enduring impact on Cassirer, he was hardly an orthodox Neo-Kantian. He departed from the standard Marburgian scientific "critique of reason" with his occupation with an expanded "critique of culture" that included independent, pre-scientific, primitive 'symbolic forms', and he unstitched Kant's 'productive synthesis' of the transcendental schematism of understanding by distinguishing between the symbolic forms of scientific knowledge and everyday sensory perceptions (Friedman, 2000, 108). In fact, he agreed with Heidegger that the anthropological as well as the fundamental hermeneutic

problem of meaning are of profound philosophical importance.[25] The reason the Davos debate is engraved in the memory of twentieth century intellectual history, and the reason it is discussed in the present study, is because it was never solely over philosophical minutiae. Embodying some of the generational, cultural, and political clashes, from the very beginning the conflict over Kant was perceived as a momentous event of symbolic import. Hermann Herrigel, reporting at the time for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, presents the event as a watershed moment, encapsulating "not merely an academic struggle of the professors" but "a confrontation between representative figures of the two epochs" (Herrigel, 1929, 4). Echoing this testimony, Emmanuel Levinas, who was present in Davos, recalls decades later that "for a young student, the impression was of being present at the creation and the end of the world" (Robbins, 2001, 35). As it was generally agreed that Heidegger emerged triumphant, the Davos encounter came to exemplify the twilight of Neo-Kantian idealism and the rise of *Neues Denken* and *Existenzphilosophie*. By extension, it was taken to reflect the dusk of philosophical rationalism and the dawn of a more subjective and experiential mode of philosophizing (Gordon, 2010, 50; Meyer, 2009, 234-72).[26]

In what follows, I suggest that the Cassirer-Heidegger encounter can be seen as representing the termination of a specific German-Jewish vision pertaining to a general conflation of Judaism with the values of the enlightenment and to the possibility of forming an enlightened, rational, and secular society inspired by the Jewish spirit of ethical monotheism in which Jews can be treated as equals. Without reducing the philosophical character of this debate to either a political or theological confrontation, I wish to claim that only by taking into account these subcurrents as well can a fuller understanding of the resonances of the debate for Jews be reached.

The Davos Debate: Theological Angles

One of Cassirer's prevailing intellectual concerns is the phenomenon of myth as a cultural and philosophical category. In his three-volume masterpiece, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,* Cassirer

[25] In *Sein und Zeit* (SZ 51n6/ BT, 490) Heidegger recalls a meeting with Cassirer in 1923 in Hamburg where they agreed on the necessity of "an existential analytic".
[26] Friedman (2000) identifies it as the moment of birth of the so-called analytical and continental philosophical divide.

expands Kant's critique of reason to a full-fledged critique of culture, adding to the original Kantian a-priori representations of space, time, and the categories also symbolic forms by which the transcendental consciousness produces reality. Building on the Kantian legacy of the spontaneity of consciousness governed by its own internal principles, Cassirer records a Hegelian narrative of a progressive and synthetic development of human consciousness from its primitive mythical stage to its most advanced stage in the enlightenment model of autonomous human subjectivity (Cassirer, 1955). While Cassirer rejected the Hegelian idea of the identity of reality and thought, he does focus on concrete, cultural manifestations of symbolic forms and depicts the mythical consciousness as advancing by way of Hegelian *Aufhebung* – negation, preservation, and self-overcoming - to the expression of more developed symbolic forms, such as religion, art, historiography, and ultimately rational science (Verne, 1969). As he explains in the second volume dedicated to "Mythical Thought", while profoundly undeveloped, myth is a form of expression by which "consciousness frees itself from the passive capacity in sensory impression and creates a world of its own in accordance with a spiritual principle" (Cassirer, 1955, 14). Myth is a form of objectification of spirit, a tool for organizing reality and hence situated within the domain of rationality. However, it lacks self-reflection and transparency; it bespeaks the creative and autonomous capacities of the human spirit by imposing a symbolic form on reality while perceiving itself overwhelmed by and absolutely receptive to the surrounding world. Moreover, it does not distinguish between its mythological symbolism and the non-mythical world it symbolizes. Religious consciousness is only slightly more developed in Cassirer's scheme, for it successfully differentiates between sign and meaning. Yet the two are closely interrelated; identical in content but not in form. "If we attempt to isolate and remove the basic mythical components from religious belief", Cassirer argues, "we no longer have religion in its real, objectively historical manifestation; all that remains is a shadow of it, an empty abstraction" (ibid, 239). Overcoming the mythical and religious consciousness amounts to its subordination to the rule of reason and self-transparency. Thus, the demythologized scientific mind "knows that the symbols it employs are *symbols* and comprehends them as such" (ibid, 26). In Cassirer's version of Hegelianism, ascending the ladder of symbolic forms is tantamount to the increase of freedom, which he understands as the spontaneous ability to form symbolic images in consciousness. "Human culture taken as a whole", he writes, "may be described as

the process of man's progressive self-liberation" (Cassirer, 1956, 228). In his portrayal of the evolution of human spirit from the most basic *expressive* type of symbolic meaning, through the *representative* symbolic meaning and finally to the *significative* function of symbolic meaning, Cassirer demonstrates his faith in an overarching enlightenment narrative of progress (although situating the analysis of myth and religion in this threefold outline is hardy straightforward). While it is true that Cassirer presents a 'centrifugal' structure in which developments spring from a common core and centre, it is nevertheless the case that for him consciousness and history progress internally and teleologically from the juvenile mythical thinking towards the mature scientific thinking (Richter, 2000). Cassirer's programme is predicated on the development from an illusion of receptivity, passivity, and myth, to the veneration of creative spontaneity, agency, and reason. At its core is the *Bildung* ideal of cultivation of knowledge, skill and above all, the improvement of one's character. Importantly, in Cassirer's narrative, the progress of human spirit amounts to the movement towards secularity.

When considering the above in the context of the Davos encounter, it becomes clear that for Cassirer, Heidegger's emphasis on the receptivity of Dasein's thrownness resembles the primitive mythical consciousness that ought to be overcome. Indeed, the critical distinction between the mythical and disenchanted mind corresponds to the crux of his dispute with Heidegger over role of the spontaneity and receptivity in Kant. As Cassirer writes: "while logical reflection tends […] to resolve all receptivity into spontaneity, mythic conception shows exactly the opposite tendency, namely, to regard all spontaneous action as something receptive, and all human achievement as something merely bestowed" (1953, 60). For him, Heidegger's insistence on the centrality of the pre-conceptual and the pre-scientific for the meaning of our existence is strikingly similar to the primitive mythical mind. While acknowledging that Heidegger's philosophy is not a religious programme, he stresses that its content is nevertheless *secularized*, that is, determined by its religious origin and as such detrimentally continues to bear its weight.

After the Davos encounter, Cassirer reiterated these points again. Heidegger "comes […] from the philosophy of religion", Cassirer observes, and his philosophy is coloured by this source. Indeed, the perspective of *Existenzphilosophie* as a whole is thoroughly religious, according to Cassirer. The

general world of *Das Man* and the modality of inauthenticity are portrayed as "a kind of 'fall from grace'", and the emphasis on historicality is "always a religious-individualistic comprehension of history" (1994, 202). Cassirer also participates in the then-widespread interpretive trend of reading Heidegger as a secularized Kierkegaard, which figured prominently in Jewish and non-Jewish circles throughout the century and which we shall encounter in the following chapters (Baring, 2015a; Herskowitz, 2017c).[27] He states, for example, that in *Sein und Zeit* "all temporality has its roots in the 'present moment' [*Augenblick*] seen in a religious sense – for it is constituted through 'Sorge' and through the basic religious phenomenon of death – and 'Angst' (cf. Kierkegaard)" (ibid, 200-1). In Heidegger's analysis of anxiety and finitude "a genuine religious tone becomes audible, as with Kierkegaard" (206). Perceptively, Cassirer also counts Luther alongside the Danish thinker as core theoretical sources from which the "power and depth" of Heidegger's "religious purposes" is gained. He even compares Heidegger's "deeply religious, especially Protestant" tone with a sermon by Luther on death (Skidelsky, 2018, 212). The problem with Heidegger drawing on Luther and Kierkegaard is twofold: first, that he evokes an individualized and subjectivist tradition instead of a universalist perspective; and second, that these religious thinkers are utilized while their theological commitments are bracketed. Unlike Kierkegaard, Cassirer affirms,

> "with Heidegger, the problem seems to cut more deeply, insofar as his posing of the question was wholly determined by theological considerations […], but the theological solution to the problem is rejected. He does not allow anxiety, as mankind's basic state of mind, to be pacified through either theological metaphysics or a religious Gospel of salvation" (1994, 206).

Heidegger is still beholden to religious provenance; his thought is secularized but at the same time – or rather *therefore* - insufficiently secular. Religion and philosophy are by definition at odds - Heidegger's analysis of death, he writes, is "religious" and hence not "authentically philosophical". In a later work,

[27] For example, Adorno begins his *The Jargon of Authenticity* with the younger generation of intellectuals in the 1920s that "philosophy swayed them to choose, through freedom and autonomy, a positive theology such as had already appeared in Kierkegaard. However, they were less interested in the specific doctrine, the truth content of revelation, then in conviction […] Heretics dubbed this circle the authentics" (2003, 1). Also Taubes, in *The Political Theology of Paul*, writes: "I can't expound here on how Heidegger wants to subvert this and wants to neutralize the Christian in Kierkegaard; this is something the theologicans have never understood, that Heidegger wanted to dig the grave of theology, but I can't go into the Bultmannian naivetés today, who wanted to understand natural man using Heideggerian categories and Christian man using Pauline categories. And Heidegger played along and managed in this way to make the entire theological Marburg circle into his apostles, which was no small matter" (68).

Cassirer no doubt identifies with the view of the enlightenment thinkers which he describes when he writes: "between myth and philosophy there could be no point of contact. Myth ends where philosophy begins – as darkness gives way to the rising sun" (1946, 182-3).

One can say that a central impulse in Cassirer's thinking is the affirmation of what Hans Blumenberg calls 'the legitimacy of the modern age' (Meyer, 2013, 476; Freudenthal, 2008). Yet while Cassirer presents himself as committed to an unapologetic secular outlook, there is good reason to question both the portrayal of his own position as well as that of modernity as simply non- or a-theological. Cassirer's account of selfhood as an intelligent, spontaneous, free, infinitely creative, and a-temporal echoes familiar divine attributes and is depicted precisely in the same way that Kant himself thinks about God (Cooke, 1988). This very point came up in the debate itself (Gordon, 2010, 182-187. And insofar as Cassirer offers a model of *Aufhebung*, it follows that his liberated modern consciousness is both superior to and at the same time indebted to previous mythical and religious forms. According to this logic, myth and religion are overcome but not dispensed with (Bongardt, 2006).

Furthermore, the religious reverberations of the debate as a whole are easily comprehended, for the dispute over the dependency or agency of human existence is a steadfast theological theme. There is thus little surprise that it has been suggested to understand the Davos quarrel over Kant with reference to the conflict between Luther and Erasmus or as a secularized instantiation of the rivalry between Augustinianism and Pelagianism (Krois, 1983; Moyn and Yadin-Israel, 2012). In both cases, the nature of the human being is debated: are humans completely dependent on divine grace, or does human agency have an active role in the process of salvation? Cassirer's optimistic view of human potentiality situates him alongside the 'humanism' of Pelagius and Erasmus, while Heidegger's pessimism regarding the fallen and dependent character of human existence parallels with the 'anti-humanism' of Augustine and Luther.

The debate approximates the theological on another point as well: the question of transcendence and prospect of the human spirit's strive for infinitude as its *terminus ad quem*. For Cassirer, this strive is epistemological and moral, not theological. Human spirit can transcend the constrictions of its finitude through the universality of moral action and the symbolic objectification of culture. Heidegger too

insists on a theologically-free manner of philosophizing, although he denies Cassirer's ability to attain that goal. For him, the strive for a fictional a-temporality contradicts the fact that any disclosure of Dasein and its world is grounded in the fundamental temporality of its being-in-the-world, which no historical development can overcome. As he writes in *Sein und Zeit*, "That there are 'eternal truths' will not be adequately proved until someone has succeeded in demonstrating that Dasein has been and will be for all eternity" (SZ 227/ BT 269-270). Demonstratively, for Heidegger, Cassirer is ensnared by traditional metaphysics. "The idea of an infinite thinking", Heidegger proclaims, "is an absurdity" (GA 3, 272/Heidegger, 1990,170).

In Davos, arguing against Cassirer's interpretation of the Kantian categorical imperative as a moment in which the finite human can break out into the infinite, Heidegger declares:

> "[I]n the Categorical Imperative we have something which goes beyond the finite creature. But precisely the concept of the Imperative as such shows the inner reference to a finite creature. Also, this going-beyond to something higher is always just a going-beyond to the finite creature, to one which is created (angel). This transcendence too still remains within the creatureliness [*Geschöpflichkeit*] and finitude" (Gordon, 2010, 162).

While it is difficult to determine precisely what Heidegger means by invoking angels, it is clear that in his view Cassirer does not draw the radical conclusions of Dasein's temporality and finitude (ibid, 162-89). In his insistence on the immanence of Dasein's transcendence, Heidegger does away with the Neo-Kantian notion of infinitude as an operative concept. In his Kant book, Heidegger states that "thought as such […] is in itself the seal of finitude". And in noting the creatureliness and dependency of Dasein, he deliberately opposes the enlightenment's self-created and autonomous self promulgated by Cassirer. And yet, the cited passage above is itself stocked with theological terminology and as we have seen, Cassirer faults Heidegger's thought for being constrained by the religious import of its origins. Heidegger would no doubt reject the claim that finitude is only understood in light of divine infinitude, or that creatures require a creator – a claim frequently levelled against him by theologians - on the grounds that such an argument is predicated on a misunderstanding of phenomenology, his project of fundamental ontology, and constitutes an illicit meddling of theological considerations with philosophy.

A pattern thus emerges, whereby both thinkers see themselves as overcoming a religiously-informed manner of philosophizing, while seeing their interlocutor as still burdened and impoverished by it. For

Heidegger, Cassirer's *philosophia perennis* is defective; for Cassirer, the flaw lies in Heidegger's religiously-stamped *Existenzphilosophie*. What is disclosed, at any rate, is the theological entanglement inherent to the discussion. This is not to say that the philosophical encounter between Cassirer and Heidegger should be reformulated theologically. The point is, rather, that both seem to recognize that the theological is not absent from their encounter.[28]

Kant between *Deutschtum* and *Judentum*

As almost everything else in the tumultuous period between the wars, the philosophical discourse too was deeply political. Specifically, disputes over the interpretation of Kant were a charged political matter, as the heated debate over the belongingness of *Judentum* and *Deutschtum* was projected onto it. The most outspoken advocate of the harmonizing position was of course Hermann Cohen, whose patriotic *Deutschtum und Judentum* (1916), as well as other essays, championed the philosophical and political alignment of Judaism, Kantianism, and Germanism (Cohen, 1924a). In a response to this piece, Bruno Bauch, one of the editors of the prestigious journal *Kantstudien* and an established Neo-Kantian philosopher, offered an analysis of the concept of the German nation, defined as the "*Gemeinschaft der 'Mitgeborenen'*", intentionally aiming to exclude the Jews, who were considered *fremdvölkisch* (Sieg, 1991; Hoeres, 2004, 232-8; Sluga, 1993, 82-5). With the backdrop of the failing war effort and the increasing suspicion against Jewish loyalty, Bauch specifically denounced the "Jewification" [*Verjudung*] of German philosophy by the foreign influences of Jewish thinkers. Sympathetic to an earlier attack on Cohen by the journalist Lenore Ripke-Kühne and echoing her claim, Bauch also singled out Cohen in an ensuing explanatory letter and challenged "the Jewish thinker's" ability to understand "the German philosopher" Kant. According to Bauch, Jews could only produce a "Jewish Kant", while 'real' Germans alone are capable of aptly understanding the great philosopher. "Not even a Jew of Cohen's intellectual rank" can be included in the exalted tradition of German idealism. Tainted by "Jewish formalism", Cohen and Marburg Neo-Kantianism as a whole pose a threat to genuine German

[28] Przywara, for example, reports (O'Meara, 2009, 225) that conversations he had with Heidegger at Davos in 1929 and Freiburg in 1930 "clarified the idea of creatureliness".

philosophy (Bauch, 1916a, 1916b).[29] In response to Bauch's anti-Semitic pronouncements, Cohen and Cassirer resigned from the *Kant Gesellschaft*, and when the idea of conducting a debate on the matter over the pages of the *Kantstudien* journal was suggested, Bauch resigned from its editorial board, claiming it was "Judaized" [*verjudet*].

Around the same time, Cohen's claim for the "inner affinity" [*innere Beziehung*] between Kantianism and Judaism came under further attack by another prominent German intellectual, Ernst Troeltsch. This time, the controversy revolved around the question of the parochiality or universality of the biblical prophets' message. Characteristically, Cohen argued that in terms of content, there was absolutely no difference between "the religion of the prophets and the ethics of Kant" (Cohen, 1924b). Troeltsch, on the other hand, set up a barrier between Judaism and Kant by historicizing and hence confining the significance of the prophets to the limited context of the ancient Hebrews. Here, too, Troeltsch claimed that between himself, the Protestant German, and Cohen, the Jew, lay a fundamental gap that prevented the possibility of their mutual understanding. Effectively, Cohen's philosophy was opposed to what is essentially German (Troeltsch, 1925, 34-64, 820-1; Dietrich, 1986, 29-60; Melber, 1968, 216-34). Both the Bauch and Troeltsch polemics demonstrate that around WWI the deepening social wedge between Germans and Jews was paralleled in, and at the same time drew on, matters of spirit. Many among the intelligentsia perceived the war as more than a mere military or political event. It was a spiritual event; what was at stake was not only state borders or political institutions, but the very civilization, values, and philosophical ideas embodied in these institutions - the German spirit as such. The enemy, accordingly, is not merely a political and military force; it is a threatening metaphysical power. There were two fronts in the German struggle: in the trenches, and in spirit - and the former is in truth derived from the latter. Philosophy was the true front.

Significantly, it was not Cohen who responded to Bauch and Ripke-Kühne, but Cassirer. In a defence that remained unpublished until recently, Cassirer argues against the "dogmatic naturalism" expressed in Bauch's tirade, noting that philosophical concepts transcend ethnic boundaries (Cassirer, 2008, 42).

[29] To a certain extent, there indeed was a split between German and Jewish Kantianism which allowed Bauch to generalize from Cohen to the entire Marburg school, whose major adheres were Jews. In his memoir, Löwith (1994, 105) somewhat dismissively called the Marburg school a "Jewish liberal affair".

As to the mutual exclusivism through which Bauch frames the "spiritual-national relationship" between Germans and Jews, Cassirer notes that Germany is indeed the native land of its Jews as well, and that it is solely the result of an external and simplistic confrontational framing that people like Bauch use to neutralize the possibility of true encounter and relation, "for everything that could ground such a relationship is denied to the Jew" (ibid, 47). Of course, the harmonized portrayal of German-Jewish spirit fell on deaf German ears. The debacle in the war only intensified the duty to prevail in the philosophical war. Importantly, the chauvinism informing the dispute over Kant was not confined to the period of the first World War. A few weeks before the encounter in Davos, a Nazi thinker, Othmar Spann, delivered a lecture in Munich (attended by Hitler) on the 'contemporary cultural crisis'. It is reported that Spann discussed Neo-Kantianism and bemoaned that "it was sad that the German people should have to be reminded of their own Kantian philosophy by foreigners [*Fremden*]". The names of Cohen and Cassirer were explicitly mentioned as such foreigners (Krois, 2004).

It not unlikely that these connotations were present in the Davos encounter, for Heidegger shared Bauch's fears of the Jewish threat on *Deutschheit*.[30] Heidegger proves to be caught up in the 'Myth of Judaization' that was an integral element of the way in which the *Judenfrage* was discussed in Weimar Germany (Aschheim, 1996). According to this perception, the 'Jewish Spirit' was taking over the German Spirit and undermining its destinal march. Heidegger's desire to overcome what he took to be the 'Jewish' worldlessness and calculative perception of being is an idiosyncratic version of the effort for *Entjudung*. In a letter late in 1929, only a short while after Davos, Heidegger writes: "We are faced with a choice, either to provide our *German* intellectual life once more with real talents and educators rooted in our own soil [*bodenständige*], or to hand over that intellectual life once and for all to the growing Jewification [*Verjudung*] in the broad and narrow sense" (Sieg, 1989). Evidently, this was a steadfast view of Heidegger, who already in 1916 considered "Jewification" to be a "frightening" threat to "our culture and universities" (G. Heidegger, 2005, 91). In *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger indirectly affiliates what he considers the debased interpretation of Kant with Judaism when in his analysis of the

[30] Toni Cassirer, wife of Ernst, notes (1948, 165) that those present at the conference in Davos "were not unaware of Heidegger's antisemitism", although her testimony of the event is not entirely reliable.

ontological structure of 'conscience' he assembles together the Kantian "idea of moral law" and what he disparagingly calls "Pharisaism" [*Pharisäismus*] as mistakenly perceiving Dasein's conscience as oriented and orienting towards a practicality governed by "calculative maxims", instead of what "calls it forth to its factical potentiality-of-being-a-self" (SZ 294/ BT 341). In 1933, in a letter denunciating the Neo-Kantian philosopher of Jewish origin Richard Hönigswald, Heidegger antagonistically associates Neo-Kantianism with liberalism and implies its foreignness to true Germanism when he argues that "under the seemingly strict [*streng*] scientific philosophical grounds, the Neo-Kantian view of man obscures his historical rootedness and in his *volkish* belonging to his origin from soil and blood [*Herkunft aus Boden und Blut*]" (GA 16, 132-3). Indeed, little of Heidegger's political remarks and practical involvement can be understood outside the paradigm of the need for a German spiritual mobilization (Flasch, 2000). As demonstrated in his rectorial address as well as in many of his political utterances, he was among those who perceived the 1933 revolution to be a continuation and corrective to what the spiritual German revolution of 1914 was supposed to be. In 1934, for instance, he declares that "the Great War comes over us *only now*", but that this war is philosophical, and hence "the Great War must now be *spiritually* conquered by us, i.e., the battle will become the *innermost law* of our existence [*Daseins*]" (GA 16, 280, 283). Thus, while the philosophical taste of Bauch, Spann, Troeltsch, and Heidegger are in many ways conflicted, they stand united in perceiving themselves as fighting Germany's philosophical war and in viewing the Jews as unassimilable. Evidently - and with respect to Heidegger, probably consequentially - they also concur in their objection to Cohen and Cassirer's understanding of Kant.

Cassirer himself was hardly unaware that the political tensions around the 'Jewish' interpretation of Kant were as heated now as they were around 1914. This is made clear in a letter he wrote on 26 November 1938 to a former college Albert Görland, who had become a Nazi supporter. Rebuking Görland for allowing his unbridled ambition to lead him to betray his teachers, friends, and beliefs, Cassirer exclaims:

> "You knew what Jews and Judaism are; you knew all about the corruptive influence of Judaism on German philosophy. Because you knew and understood the accomplishment of Hermann

> Cohen and knew about yourself that you would not have written a single line of your own books without it. Was it really necessary to throw all this away?" (Cassirer, 1948, 242).

Cassirer's occupation with myth aimed in part to conceptualize and combat what he considered to be the re-emergence of pre-scientific, narrow-minded mythical forces taking over Germany – of which Heidegger was a proponent (Strenski, 1984). Notably, amidst rising tides of political reactionaryism and anti-Semitism, Cassirer offered a passionate defence of Weimar's liberal constitution at his University's celebration for the Republic's tenth anniversary in 1928.

It is thus unsurprising that the political accent of their encounter was registered, and indeed amplified after Heidegger joined Hitler's ranks. Through a deeply fragile conceptualization according to which philosophical irrationalism is intrinsically prone to reactionary political views, Heidegger's non-rationalism served as an explanation for his support of National Socialism, and Cassirer's adherence to reason was tied to his political liberalism. This conceptualization matched the political penchants of these two philosophers, but it cannot be said to reflect the larger political and philosophical landscape. In fact, it is easily refuted when one considers that by all means not all who huddled under the umbrella-term of Neo-Kantianism leaned to the political left. Many who pledged alliance to the new regime, surely from the academia, believed in reason and science and fervently rejected the conceptual framework of Heidegger and his ilk (Sluga, 1993, 7, 99-100). It should be stressed, moreover, that approaching their point of contestation through the rational/irrational distinction is counterproductive, for Heidegger was not against the intellect and science, but rather against intellectualism and scientism. He sought to dethrone reason from its pretence of ultimacy, not reject it altogether.

But while inaccurate, this politicized interpretation was dominant, and it was particularly appealing in Jewish circles. Like most acculturated and progressive-leaning Jewish *Bildungsbürgertum*, Cassirer had confidence in the power of reason to organize and improve society. And it is no coincidence that the autonomous, self-governing, and rational Kantian notion of self he champions bears the identical features of the citizen of the liberal society he wished to realize. In this respect, Cassirer was *pars pro toto* for liberal German-Jews. Indeed, no one embraced so enthusiastically the interlacing of emancipation from myth and political emancipation as the Jews, who hoped it would dismantle the deep-seated religious prejudices and fictitious superstitions that continued to thwart the realization of

their hope for true equality. And nowhere was the unfulfilled promise of modernity experienced more acutely than in Weimar, when its liberal constitution granted Jews *de-jure* the equal rights they so coveted for the first time, while *de-facto* they were increasingly perceived as outsiders.

Heidegger, Reason, and Judaism: Orthodox and Liberal Constructions

As noted, it would be a mistake to reduce the battle over Kant to the political or to the theological; but it is also a mistake to de-contextualize it and depict it as a pure philosophical engagement.[31] In both orthodox and liberal Jewish discourses, these political and theological resonances did not go unnoticed. In a review of Julius Kraft's 1932 *Von Husserl zu Heidegger: Kritik der phänomenologischen Philosophie*, Ludwig Feuchtwanger, an esteemed journalist and publisher in the Jewish intellectual scene in Germany and the editor of the *Bayerischen Israelitische Gemeindezeitung*, applauds Kraft for brilliantly carrying out a "productive critique of Heidegger's pseudo-philosophy" in which "bombastic descriptions of trivial everyday wisdom" grant a misleading "appearance of philosophical profundity". Feuchtwanger had attended some of Heidegger's lectures and recognized the philosopher's talents. A month earlier he wrote to the Jewish scholar Ernst Simon: "I could really use a good Heideggerian essay. Heidegger is the leader of National Socialism and is committed [*verschrieben*] to the party in his seminar, root and branch [*Haut u. Haar*]" (ESA, 332). Yet Feuchtwanger's review gives voice to a deep disapproval of Heidegger's non-rationalistic tendencies and methodology. Feuchtwanger confirms Kraft's view, according to which phenomenology is an intuitionalist and irrational endeavour, and hence associated with authoritarian politics and nihilism. "Heidegger's philosophy-en-vogue", Feuchtwanger writes, "had to provide the euphemistic 'ideal' garb for our whole 'intellectual' National Socialism and Noble-Anti-Semitism in which the most brutal nihilism exempts oneself impressively and truly 'intellectually'." Making an early connection between Heidegger and Carl Schmitt, he continues: "This existence philosophy is also the foundation of the new theories concerning suspending the state-law" (Feuchtwanger, 1932b, 298-9). Framing Kraft's work within its broader intellectual context, Feuchtwanger pairs Kraft's critique of Heidegger with Cassirer's critique of Heidegger's interpretation of Kant (1931), because in both cases, Heidegger's anti-rationalism is indicted from the

[31] A thoroughly politicized interpretation of the Davos debate is offered by Bourdieu (1991).

standpoint of reason. That very year Cassirer published his monograph *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* which was enthusiastically welcomed by Feuchtwanger. In his review of the work, he found in it a worthy defence of the values of the enlightenment, which alone can lead human sciences to overcome "the false lights of *Seins- und Lebensphilosophie*, whether drawn from Klages or Heidegger" (Feuchtwanger, 2001, 49). It is clear that for Feuchtwanger, the fact that Heidegger opposes reason situates him as an enemy of Judaism as well.

A more direct identification between reason and Judaism together with an overt contrast to Heidegger's non-rationalism and Nazism is made by Joseph Soloveitchik. Soloveitchik was writing a dissertation on Hermann Cohen's epistemology in Berlin around the time of the publication of *Sein und Zeit* and later became the towering rabbinical figure of post-war modern orthodoxy in American.[32] In his work *Halakhic Man* (1941), a spiritual portrait of an idealized orthodox Jew harmonized with the traits of the Marburg Neo-Kantian scientist, Heidegger is subjected to fierce diatribe (Kaplan, 1973; Munk, 1996, 91-4; Ravizky, 1986; Bruckstein, 1998). Soloveitchik includes "the phenomenological, existential and antiscientific school of Heidegger and his coterie" together with the likes of Bergson, Nietzsche, Spengler, and Klages as a manifestation of "the entire Romantic aspiration to escape from the domain of knowledge, the rebellion against the authority of objective, scientific cognition". Drawing what he sees as its direct political outcome, Soloveitchik announces that these irrational tendencies

> "have brought complete chaos and human depravity to the world. And let the events of the present era be proof! The individual who frees himself from the rational principle and who casts off the yoke of objective thought will in the end turn destructive and lay waste the entire created order".

Warning against the penetration of the dangerous worldview associated with Heidegger into Judaism, Soloveitchik advocates for a religion of reason.

[32] I discuss Soloveitchik's acquaintance with Heidegger's philosophy in Herskowitz (2015) and (2016). Soloveitchik shared a room with his fellow philosophy student and Jewish orthodox friend Alexander Altmann, who was occupied at the time with applying Heidegger's philosophical insights to Jewish theology (see chapter 3). One of Soloveitchik's students records the following testimony, purportedly stated by Soloveitchik himself: "I was in Heidegger's class. I was a good student. He continually spoke about human destiny, spiritual perceptions, and the events of that time" (Rakeffet-Rothkoff, 1999, 195). Given the pithy information provided in this testimony, its reliability is difficult to assess. See also Wolfson (2015b). Another testimony is provided by Zev Gotthold (Johnston, 1999, 119-24, 126-31) who claims that Soloveitchik commented to him on the difficulty of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*.

> "It is preferable that religion should ally itself with the forces of clear, logical cognition […] rather than pledge its troth to beclouded, mysterious ideologies that grope in the dark corners of existence, unaided by the shining light of objective knowledge, and believe that they have penetrated to the secret core of the world" (Soloveitchik, 1983, 141n 4).

Later in this work, "[the] development from 'inauthentic existence' [*uneigentliches Sein*] to 'authentic existence' [*eingentliches Dasein*] in the philosophy of Heidegger (as expressed in *Being and Time*)" is charged for secularizing and corrupting the notion "of the obligatory nature of the creative gesture, of self-creation as an ethical norm", which Soloveitchik claims finds its "pure and holy" origin in Judaism. This is a telling point: first, because Soloveitchik sees the existential ideal of authenticity as a corruption of the ideal of *Bildung* which he attributes originally to Maimonides; and second, because he presents Heidegger as secularizing not Christian notions but a fundamental Jewish feature.

Soloveitchik mentions Heidegger alongside Kierkegaard, Ibsen, and Scheler in a broad polemic, but nothing close to an elaborate discussion of Heidegger's position or his charged terminology is offered. It is clear, however, that for Soloveitchik, uncorrupted existentialism, i.e., the *Bildung* ideal of moral self-creation and cultivation, emerges from Judaism. Whether the corrupted character of modern existentialism reflects any theological biases, Protestant or otherwise, and whether the rejection of reason is itself an outcome of a theological bias, remains unclear. Its corruption, however, results in barbaric ethical and political ramifications, for "the longing for creation was perverted into the desire for brutal and murderous domination. Such views have brought chaos and disaster to our world, which is drowning in blood" (ibid, 164n147).[33] Echoing this point again in 1944, and following Kraft's critical approach toward phenomenology as such, Soloveitchik considers "modern existential philosophy" to be a "mystical tren[d]". He identifies this in the *strenge Wissenschaft* of Husserl's intuitionism that recedes from the "'public' critical reason" to "a 'private' distorted subjective experience", and in this regard, Heidegger is a true student of Husserl. "It is no mere coincidence that the most celebrated philosophers of the third Reich were outstanding disciples of Husserl", he explains, hinting to Heidegger.

> "Husserl's intuitionism (*Wesensschau*), which Husserl, a trained mathematician, strived to keep on the level of mathematical intuition, was transposed into emotional approach to reality. When

[33] In my essay (Herskowitz, 2016) I object to Kaplan's (1973, 63n63) claim that the two quoted passages demonstrate an "undeniable" Heideggerian influence on Soloveitchik.

> reason surrenders its supremacy to dark, equivocal emotions, no dam is able to stem the rising tide of the effective stream".

The contrast between "intellectual morality" and "mystic wisdom", Soloveitchik announces, "was the philosophical Armageddon of our age" (1986, 51, 53).

It should be noted that while never retracting his damning judgment of Heidegger, Soloveitchik's perspective later veers towards existentialism and one finds in some of his writings a more 'Heideggerian' tune (Soloveitchik, 1965). Claiming now that existentialism is an ally of Judaism, Soloveitchik stresses the thrown and anxiously finite nature of human existence. "Man is in exile", he muses. "Man is a homeless being […] Judaism says that not only the Jew is in exile, but that man as such, man in general, leads an exilic existence […] Man was cursed by the Almighty and expelled from Paradise and became a homeless being" (1980, 326). In a Bultmannian manner, Soloveitchik now both accepts Heidegger's idea of the *unheimelich* character of Dasein and reclaims it as an originally biblical-theological precept. Nowhere, however, does he explain how his emigration from the rationalism of Neo-Kantianism to a more existentially-oriented perspective evades the political and ethical pitfalls he previously associated with Heidegger with such ferocity (Possen, 2012).

When Feuchtwanger and Soloveitchik consider Heidegger's assault on reason to be a threat on Judaism, they envision orthodox Judaism. Yet the clearest articulation of the affiliation of reason, Judaism, and morality in contrast to irrationality, Nazism, and Heidegger, is presented by Cassirer himself, who unlike Feuchtwanger and Soloveitchik, better represents the majority of the Jews at the time. While never entirely out of sight, Cassirer's Jewishness became increasingly important to him after the Nazi takeover and his subsequent exile – first to Oxford, then to Sweden, and eventually to the US (Mali, 1986; Meyer, 2000; Schwarzschild, 1991; Hertzberg, 1970). Opposing Heidegger's framework, in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* he writes:

> "In opposition to [Heidegger's philosophy], we uphold, despite everything, the broader, more universal, *idealistic* meaning of religion and the idealistic meaning of history. In it we behold liberation and deliverance from the 'anxiety' which is the signature, the basic 'state-of-mind' of finite Dasein. But this anxiety signifies only the beginning, not the final, inevitable constraint on our finite Dasein" (1994, 203-4).

In "Judaism and Modern Political Myths" (1944), written a decade and a half after the Davos encounter, Cassirer explicitly identifies the religion of "universal, idealistic meaning" with Judaism. Drawing on

but also expanding his earlier depiction of prophetic Judaism in his analysis of symbolic forms, Cassirer portrays the spiritual forces undergirding the present tormented political world as a combat between the new tribal modern myth espoused by Nazism, and its antithesis, Judaism (1955, 118-120, 225-6). Historically and conceptually, it is Judaism that "first made the decisive step that led from a mythical to an ethical religion" (Cassirer, 1944, 115). Nowhere is the war of ethical religion against myth more apparent than in the biblical commandment forbidding the making of "a graven image" and in the Hebrew prophets' ethos of replacing sacrifices with "the fundamental religious and ethical duties". Both, he claims, challenge poetic imagery and anthropomorphism, the very core of mythical idolatry.

This argument exemplifies Cassirer's logic of idealism, whereby pure idea is superior to materiality and physical rites progress to moral ideals. On this account, the ritualistic element in Judaism is superseded by a spiritualized ethical impulse. In unequivocal Kantian language, Cassirer considers this the universal calling of Judaism, one that induces the "ideal of perpetual peace" (ibid, 123). While in some respects Cassirer had disassociated himself from what he saw as the limited philosophical perspective of Marburg Neo-Kantianism, his depiction of Judaism follows in the footsteps of Cohen, who promulgated an ethical monotheism from the sources of Judaism and Kant (Cassirer, 1996, 101). Ironically, it is Heidegger who called out precisely this position in his later lecture course on Nietzsche as nihilistic, declaring that "the god who is seen in terms of 'morality', and only this one is meant, when Nietzsche says 'God is dead'" (GA 6.1:320). From Cassirer's perspective, the model of moral Judaism is the bulwark against the nihilism promoted by Heidegger. It appears that Cassirer is suggesting that only religion can combat the myth of totalitarian politics, yet it should be noticed that he presents a spiritualized Judaism, seemingly bearing little theological content outside its reduced Kantian ethical signification. Yet Cassirer nevertheless diverges here from his earlier analysis of the evolution of spirit presented in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, for by crafting an image of Judaism as the prominent *secularizing* force prompting the advancement of spirit towards the scientific, universal, and ethical consciousness, he ends up ceding to the very secularized model he denounced in Heidegger.

Cassirer develops the thought of the compliance of secularization, rationalism, and liberalism in an analysis of myth and its function in the history of western philosophy in his *The Myth of the State*. Best

seen as a counter-programme to the lionization of the mythical by political theorists such as Georges Sorel, Carl Schmitt, and Alfred Bäumler, this work is an attempt to explain the rehabilitation of the mythical in modern political thought. The third part of his analysis is dedicated to tracing the main intellectual sources of twentieth century political myth. At one point he claims that the political leader of the modern totalitarian state serves the equivalent role of the magician in primitive societies. This is interpreted as a de-secularization of politics, for "the *homo magus* is, at the same time, the *homo divinans*" (Cassirer, 1946, 288). Notably, he recognizes Oswald Spengler - "a prophet of evil" - and Heidegger, with their rejection of scientific causation and promotion of the fatalistic force of destiny, as chief contributors to the "new art of divination" in politics. As before, Cassirer focuses on the notion of *Geworfenheit* as encompassing the core of Heidegger's philosophical deficiencies. In his earlier reproach of Heidegger's *Existenzphilosophie*, he claimed that the fallacy of this notion is that it does away with the ideal of eternal truth (1994, 205-6). To this he now adds the charge of fatalism, for "we cannot change" the general conditions into which we are thrown (Cassirer, 1946, 293). His critique of Heidegger culminates with an ethical and political accusation (Barash, 2008):

> "A theory that sees in the *Geworfenheit* of man one of his principal characters has given up all hopes of an active share in the construction and reconstruction of man's cultural life. Such philosophy renounces its own fundamental theoretical and ethical ideals. It can be used, then, as a pliable instrument in the hands of the political leaders" (Cassirer, 1946, 293).

For the *Aufklärer* humanist Cassirer, as for the many who marched under the banner of reason and liberalism, this Heideggerian notion encapsulates the dangers of irrationalism and constitutes an assault on what they held most dear: freedom, ethics, and the capacity to reach the truth (Kaufmann, 1973).

In his essay "Judaism and the Modern Political Myths", Judaism is depicted as the anti-mythical force of universal ethics and reason, and is offered as the anti-thesis to Heideggerian philosophy and the sole cure for western civilization after its "open and solemn enthronement of myth" (1944, 234). Cassirer voices here a common modern Jewish position that advocates for the 'contribution' of Judaism to the general society. Holding a message to the nations, the import of Judaism transcends the limits of its national and confessional constituents. One central feature of this view is that the universal Jewish

message constitutes a salvific key that can remedy society from its ills. For Cassirer, like David Neurmak, Abraham Geiger, Leo Baeck, Hermann Cohen and others, Judaism was *mythosfrei*, and it is this message that is its most urgent contribution. Tellingly, while acknowledging the unprecedented horror that is presently taking place, Cassirer still voices what can be seen as a manifesto of nineteenth century liberal Judaism in 1944:

> "What the modern Jew had to defend in this combat [against Nazism] was not only his physical existence or the preservation of the Jewish race […] We had to represent all those ethical ideals that had been brought into being by Judaism and found their way into general human culture, into the life of all civilized nations […] these ideals are not destroyed and cannot be destroyed. They have stood their ground in these critical days. If Judaism has contributed to break the power of the modern political myths, it has done its duty, having once more fulfilled its historical and religious mission" (241).

It is difficult to deny that this lofty statement seems staggeringly misplaced in 1944. Indeed, Cassirer's depiction of Judaism demonstrates a lack of self-transparency he so highly esteems. For as noted, he criticizes Heidegger for his secularized model, but then identifies a secularized Judaism as the force of secularity. His Cohenian depiction of Judaism as the ethical monotheism of the biblical prophets is modelled according and as a response to the salient tenets of nineteenth century *Kulturprotestantismus* and is made possible by the conceptual horizon of Kantianism. Ultimately, Cassirer objects to Heidegger's secularized Protestantism only to posit a highly protestantized secularized Judaism.

In addition, in his grand vision of the development of human spirit, Cassirer is not so much overcoming mythical thinking as cultivating an alternative, liberal myth. His demythization is conducted through mythization. By framing contemporary world events as a war waged between logos and mythos, Cassirer presents his own version of the common mythical motif of *Chaoskampf*. It is therefore ironic, if also fitting, that he concludes *The Myth of the State* by resorting to the Babylonian myth of the clash between the highest god Marduk and the dragon Tiamat, representing the battle between forces of order and chaos. In order to illustrate the conflict between enlightenment and myth, Cassirer inadvertently reveals the mythical features of his own thought. Hardly the anti-mythical force it is championed to be, it becomes apparent that Judaism is itself a player in a broader mythical clash. In fact, Cassirer does not only resort to Babylonian mythology, he also corrects it and in so doing presents a new myth. For according to the legend of Marduk and Tiamat, "the cosmic order arose from the primeval chaos, and

it will be preserved for all times". In Cassirer's adaptation, however, "the mythical monsters […] still survive in this universe" and maintaining the order of creation demands constant subduing of the powers of chaos by countering forces of humanism. Otherwise, chaos will once again irrupt, as it has (1944, 297-8). The correction to the myth implies that in Cassirer's Hegelian model of historical development, the negation of the lower stage that fuels progress is not final and can be revisited on a higher plane. Hence it is a constant battle against, or negation of, earlier and more primitive symbolic forms. His critique of political myth diverges from his critique of culture in that it no longer employs a narrative of progress. Not *telos* but *polemos* characterizes Cassirer's updated narrative of history. Religion does not dissolve into a higher stage of consciousness; a perpetual war wages between Judaism and mythical forces of irrationality ceaselessly threatening the very foundations of society.

In this late work, Cassirer came to recognize that Nazism is not a mere return to primitivism, but a "regulated and organized" modern phenomenon, synthetic and indeed rationalized. Still, he did not go as far as the Frankfurt school philosophers Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, who in their 1947 study *Dialectic of Enlightenment* proposed that the violence of fascism is internal to the enlightenment itself and that the dichotomies between reason and violence, enlightenment and totalitarianism are in fact false dichotomies.[34] But Cassirer's belated liberal Jewish manifesto raises the following point: At this crucial moment, after staging and losing the mythical struggle between reason and myth, he continues to claim that his Jewish ethical monotheism is the only remedy for the present situation, without explaining why his version of rationality is still able to reform society after it had so blatantly failed to do so.

I have thus far proposed that the Heidegger-Cassirer debate can be perceived as the symbolic intellectual moment of the breakdown of the Jewish liberal faith in the political-theological framework undergirding the modern promise for emancipation and equality. For Cassirer, representing the dominant German-Jewish perspective at the time, the battle over Kant staged the clash between enlightened Jewish values and reactionary promulgation of myth. As the ideal of the *Bildungsliberalismus* and Kantianism

[34] A related although not identical point is made by Eric Voegelin (1947) in his review of Cassirer's posthumous work.

represented the height of the Jewish spirit, Heidegger is not merely offering a competitive interpretation of the philosopher from Königsberg; he was orchestrating an assault on the very soul of Judaism, its universal message, and their identity as German-Jews.

There is no doubt that the mythical structure of the battle between Judaism and Heidegger is powerful, so much so that it is employed by both Cassirer and Heidegger. As we shall see, this compelling image is repeated by other thinkers discussed in this study, who regardless of their disapproval of liberal Judaism, frame their encounter with Heidegger as a spiritual war between a pagan mythical position and the universal message of Judaism – however constructed.

Franz Rosenzweig's "Exchanged Fronts"

One Jewish thinker who was not impressed by the liberal Jewish dream of demythologization or by its dichotomizing position vis-à-vis Heidegger was Franz Rosenzweig. In what is probably his last essay before his premature death in 1929, Rosenzweig pens an enthusiastic reaction to the Davos debate where he finds a deep kinship between his own thought and Heidegger's. In this short essay, entitled "Vertauschte Fronten", he points to what he identifies as the reciprocal meaning of two juxtaposed events: the publication of the second edition of Hermann Cohen's posthumous book *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, and the philosophical conference in Davos. Both events, he believes, announce the philosophical transition from 'old' to 'new' thinking. As he explains in the introduction to his masterpiece *The Star of Redemption*, 'old' thinking denotes philosophy animated by conceptual abstractions and the desire to gain "knowledge of the All [*Allheit*]" through the reduction of plurality to one single principle (Rosenzweig, 1972). This tendency is as old as philosophy itself, beginning with the pre-Socratics and climaxing in Hegel - from "Ionia to Jena". In contrast, 'new' thinking is instigated with the defiance of the factical, historical 'I' against its nullification by reduction to the All. It takes its cue from the experiential being prior to conceptualization and does not heed to the false promises of idealism to overcome temporality. As Rosenzweig identifies these features in Heidegger's Dasein, he announces that Heidegger's existential ontology is "a philosophical position [that is] precisely our position, that of the new thinking" (Roseznweig, 1930, 87/ Franks and Morgen, 2000, 150).

In a somewhat puzzling analysis, Rosenzweig portrays the late Cohen, Heidegger, and himself as promulgators of a shared vein of thought. In an unlikely link, Heidegger, a known nemesis of Neo-Kantianism, and Cohen are paired up against Cassirer, Cohen's Marburgian affiliate. This connection is made possible by Rosenzweig's controversial reading of Cohen's posthumous book. As he explains in his introduction to the collection of Cohen's essays on Judaism, *Jüdische Schriften* (1924), for Cohen of the early works, religion was not independent vis-à-vis reason, as he regarded it a transitional stage in the moral development of humanity (Rosenzweig, 1937). In his *Ethik des reinen Willens* (1904), Cohen develops the idea that religion is tied to ethics in that God is a precondition of morality - "God signifies that nature has stability so that morality is eternal" (ibid, 446). Ethics is applied to the individual as an instantiation of the *Allheit* of humanity, but the individual as such is of no interest to this regulative God. In this stage in Cohen's thought, religion is firmly bound to the limits of the system of philosophy.

However, Rosenzweig continues, towards the end of his life, in *Religion of Reason from the Sources of Judaism*, when deeply engrossed in Judaism, Cohen came to understand that his earlier Kantian framework was unable to account for the historical 'I'. This 'I', he discovered, is found in religion, as God is concerned with each individual and her personal task of moral advancement. This specific feature is highlighted in the notion of sin (as introduced by the prophet Ezekiel), representing the individual's moral deficiency, and the notion of repentance in which the individual constitutes her unique self in the face of God. Resorting to religion as an indispensable and independent framework with respect to philosophy, Cohen's earlier abstract account of the individual gives way to the concrete person.

In "Vertauschte Fronten" Rosenzweig finds affinities between "what [Heidegger] called Dasein" and what enables the "leap into Dasein", and the Cohenian concept of 'correlation' that gave rise to his own 'new thinking' as well. This notion denotes the mutual relationship between God and man wherein both attain their actuality through this non-mediating bond. The correlation between God and human, according to Rosenzweig, is what enables Cohen to account for the concrete individual person not as an anonymous representative of humanity, but as a particular 'you'. Through this notion, Cohen reveals

that religion can accomplish what ethics and philosophy cannot, namely, the establishment of an actual, living, and finite individual. At first, Cohen represented for Rosenzweig the idealism of old thinking and its desire to grasp the All through concepts and cognition; or as Rosenzweig put it, Cohen was a "new Hegel". But the introduction of the notion of 'correlation' initiated the understanding that the basic idealistic principle of the absolute sovereignty of cognition must be forfeited to release God and man from the fetters of their functional roles and comprehend them as separate-in-relation. In so doing, the 'pagan' philosopher Cohen became a philosopher of faith and ultimately anticipated new thinking's overcoming of idealism. According to Rosenzweig, Heidegger's thought holds surprising affinities with the breakthrough accomplished by the later Cohen, because "Heidegger gives philosophy the task of revealing to man, the "specifically finite being", his own "nothingness in all freedom" (1930:150). In this manner, by maintaining that late in his life Cohen shifts from Kantian idealism toward philosophy of existence, Rosenzweig can proclaim Heidegger, not Cassirer, as Cohen's true inheritor and ally to his own 'new' thinking.

Rosenzweig's intellectual narrative is highly controversial (Kinkel, 1924, 272-3; Altmann, 1962; Poma, 1997, 158-202; Gordon, 2003, 58-74). Most likely, the opposite is true: Cohen's later work on religion does not constitute a break from his idealistic philosophy, but rather its expansion. The demands of rationality and the focus on the unity of consciousness are not forgone, and if anything, it is Cassirer who ventures beyond orthodox Neo-Kantianism and, to a certain extent, signals toward philosophical anthropology (Friedman, 2000, 100-1). It appears that the reading of the development in Cohen's thought better reflects Rosenzweig's own theoretical itinerary than an impartial interpretation of Cohen's writing. "Vertauschte Fronten" thus offers an invaluable insight into the manner in which Rosenzweig, on his deathbed, situated his own thinking within the philosophical horizon of the day. But it is important to notice that in this case, the competition over Cohen's legacy is also a competition between two models of Judaism and Jewish identity. In the second volume of his work on symbolic forms, Cassirer mentions Cohen's notion of 'correlation' and cites from Cohen's late work his portrayal of the spiritualization of mythical thinking accomplished by prophetic Judaism, which, as we have seen,

buttresses Cassirer's vision of liberal Judaism (1955, 118-120, 225-6). From the other side, Rosenzweig grounds his rebellion against this very liberal vision in the 'late' Cohen of *Religion of Reason*.

It must be admitted, however, that "Vertauschte Fronten" offers an all-too-general argument and the exposition of Rosenzweig's commonalities with Heidegger is brief and cursory. It is unclear whether the Jewish thinker, whose physical condition had drastically deteriorated by 1927, is at all familiar with *Sein und Zeit*, or whether the sole source of his information about Heidegger is the newspaper report on Davos by Hermann Herrigel, which he cites. Rosenzweig's perspective of *Existenz* is also blind to the phenomenological and ontological nature of Heidegger's project. It is therefore difficult to determine how much one should read into the essay. It is noteworthy for our purposes that there is nothing in the essay regarding the question of the religious charge of Heidegger's scheme, be it the godlessness of the Dasein analytic or the prospect of leftover Christian theology in *Sein und Zeit*. The absence of these points, which were picked up by many Christian and Jewish readers at the time (as will be seen), may suggest Rosenzweig had at best a superficial familiarity with Heidegger's masterpiece.[35]

Breaking the Bond: The Reception of the Rosenzweig-Heidegger Affiliation

Notwithstanding the question of the depth of Rosenzweig's familiarity with Heidegger's philosophy, recent comparative studies of the two thinkers have fleshes out their association in much detail.[36] However, the link between Rosenzweig and Heidegger was hardly discovered or even rediscovered lately. In fact, it constitutes a persistent and recurring theme in the Jewish reception of Heidegger. The novelty of the aforementioned scholarly trend resides in the fact that it is disposed to highlight the commonalities between the two thinkers, whereas throughout the twentieth century the inclination has been to emphasize their divergences. Hans Liebeschütz, the prominent German-Jewish historian and former colleague of Cassirer in the University of Hamburg, openly expressed what seemingly remained unstated by many others when he wrote that although Rosenzweig could not have known in 1929 of

[35] Rosenzweig also mixes up some general information. He describes Heidegger as "the current holder of Cohen's Marburg chair", although the chair Heidegger assumed in Marburg was previously held by Nicolai Hartmann. Is this an innocent mistake or does it reflect Rosenzweig's half-knowledge of the events and figures involved? As Franks and Morgan note, Heidegger's only remark when a copy of Rosenzweig's paper was presented to him was that this historical error should be corrected.

[36] The scholarship juxtaposing the two is rapidly accumulating. An updated bibliography on this theme can be found in Wolfson (2014, 303-4n20).

Heidegger's future political undertaking, his philosophical "solidarity" with Heidegger, "the descendent of Black Forest farmers and a representative of a certain atheistic philosophy", is worrisome. For insofar as there is a direct connection between Heidegger's philosophical and political stances, then particularly for "the Jewish reader who experienced 1933 in Germany", Rosenzweig's suggestion is "somewhat horrifying" (1970, 170-2).[37] Alongside the political reason, Liebeschütz's mention of Heidegger's "atheistic philosophy" is significant, for it touches upon a further implicit claim underlying the attempt to dispute Rosenzweig's self-proclaimed affinity with Heidegger: that had Rosenzweig been attentive to the theological charge of Heidegger's philosophy, he would have recognized that their philosophical anthropologies are deeply discordant.

With the publication of *Sein und Zeit*, some of the early readers of *The Star* recognized the similarities between the two programmes, though some found it difficult to square Rosenzweig's theistic thought with Heidegger's theological ambiguity. The first extensive study of Rosenzweig thought, Else Freund's published dissertation *Die Existenzphilosophie Franz Rosenzweigs: Ein Beitrag Zur Analyse Seines Werkes: 'Der Stern Der Erlösung'* (1933), rightly perceives Rosenzweig's thought as participating in the philosophical horizon of *Existenzphilosophie* to which Heidegger was associated as well.[38] Written before Heidegger's political misconduct, her monograph points to various moments of comparison between the two thinkers. Among these are the shared renunciation of German idealism's conception of the 'I', the emphasis on temporal existence, the recognition of the philosophical force of death and nothingness, the acknowledgement of the finite scope of the philosophical undertaking, and the understanding of the partial nature of truth.[39] According to Freund, the link between the two thinkers is grounded in the implicit ties between *Existenzphilosophie* and theology. "The human being in the solitude and uncertainty of his actual existence, in the distress of his life and in his dilemma of conscience, has always been the subject of theology", she notes. "Both *Existenzphilosophie* and theology occupy themselves with the 'center of life of the human being'" (1973, 8). This common

[37] On Rosenzweig's reception, see Gordon (2001); Meyer (2009, 166-212).
[38] A slightly revised edition of this work was published in Hebrew (1972) and later in English as well (1979). Reference and citation here is from the English edition with occasional amendments.
[39] Freund also attends to the differences between the two accounts. Also Margarete Susman (1928, 353n1) notes the similarities between Rosenzweig and Heidegger on the theme of death. In her autobiography 1964, 116-7), Susman claims Heidegger has had a "crucial" impact on her.

feature can explain "the great interest which present-day theology takes in Heidegger's philosophy". Moreover, "Heidegger's theologically-hued expressions, such as guilt and consciousness, being-toward-death, being-fallen can be explained in terms of the identity of the subject matter" (ibid). Making use of explicit religious categories, Heidegger's thought is clearly nourished from the springs of theology, yet "the explicit reference to God is missing in his work and his position regarding theology is not yet clear". According to Freund, Heidegger's philosophy is ambiguously secularized, for "tentatively, when [Heidegger] speaks of the transcendence of existence in his philosophy, this transcendence merely marked the spot at which God could find a place" (1933, 113). And while Rosenzweig's philosophy of existence is not theology *per se*, it is nevertheless solidly fastened to it. Insofar as "the distinction between authentic and unauthentic existence is peculiar" to theology, then Rosenzweig's thinking "almost of necessity trespasses on the realm of theology" (1979, 8). Thus, while Rosenzweig and Heidegger correspond in vital moments, the former overtly embraces the theological connotation implicit in his existential perspective, while the latter's secularized system seems to both depend on it and turn a blind eye to it.

For a long time, the most elaborate and influential analysis of Heidegger and Rosenzweig was Karl Löwith's essay "M. Heidegger and F. Rosenzweig or Temporality and Eternity" (1942). As we have seen in chapter 1, Löwith is a key figure in the early confessional readings of Heidegger in the 1930s, and his analysis of the conceptual continuity between Protestant theology and Heidegger's godless world proved impactful. In his 1942 essay, Löwith follows this line of thought in approaching Heidegger's potential ties with the Jewish thought of Rosenzweig. By focusing on the theme of temporality and eternity, he sets out to dispute Rosenzweig's association with Heidegger and show that despite their apparent affinities, these are in final analysis negligible, as their diverging theological commitments lead them in opposing directions. Löwith begins by commenting on Rosenzweig's "Vertauschte Fronten" and explaining that Rosenzweig's employment of eternity as an operative concept situates him closer to Cohen, his Neo-Kantian master, than to Heidegger. Cohen cannot be considered Heidegger's philosophical godfather, for his retreat to the actual human person is exercised within his idealistic system where the infinitude of knowledge is the overarching aim. On the other

hand, for Heidegger, who addresses Dasein from within the finitude of its temporality, the idea of eternity is completely empty. Rosenzweig's narrative, Löwith determines, is misconceived.

To be sure, Rosenzweig's reconstrues the idealistic 'eternity' into an existential-religious category. But for Löwith the epistemological and the theological are not detached. The Neo-Kantian strive for infinitude is "the religious idealism of the *homo noumenon*", and Heidegger's rejection of eternity reflects a theological stance as well. This is not to say, Löwith admits, that Rosenzweig was completely off the mark in his identification with some salient themes in Heidegger's programme, such as the departure point of human facticity. But their theological differences immediately surface: On the one side, Rosenzweig celebrates eternity, and on the other side, Heidegger puts forth a "radical temporalization of truth and existence". Rosenzweig puts revelation at the heart of his thinking, while Heidegger construes it as *a-letheia* - the primordial happening of truth where the being of a being is unconcealed as what it is - and thus "empties the concept of revelation of its theological sense". For Rosenzweig, the temporal coordinates of past-present-future are mapped onto creation-revelation-redemption, while Heidegger's world is bereft of transcendence and anchored in being-toward-death. The former seeks to de-secularized the world, while the latter seeks to de-theologize it.

The vacancy of God in Heidegger's scheme is crucial for Löwith, for whom divine transcendence is the condition of possibility for human self-transcendence towards the other person. He claims the notion of selfhood advanced by Heidegger is enclosed within itself, "within a *circulus*", unable to move beyond "the first person's being" and treat the "other person" as a "second person", a "rightly conceived thou". In short, Heidegger's solipsistic monism is godless and at odds with Rosenzweig's religious dialogicalism. There are strong echoes of Martin Buber's discussion of Heidegger in his *Who is Man?* (which will be examined more closely in chapter 4) in this analysis, as Löwith basically follows Buber's dialogical logic and echoes the theological basis of his criticisms of Heidegger. Löwith made use of Buber's sociality of I-Thou already in his 1928 *Habilitationsschrift* entitled *Das Individuum in der Rolle des Mitmenschen*, written under Heidegger, where he develops a corrective to Heidegger's *Mitsein* through what he termed *Miteinandersein* (Löwith, 1982). The radical immanence of Heidegger's world, therefore, is a theological but also a social and ethical deficiency. Without revelation, Heidegger's

Dasein possesses a "deaf-blind selfhood" and lacks intersubjectivity (1942, 59). From Löwith's perspective, Heidegger's radical temporalism is bound to his immanentism and is ultimately nihilistic, which explains his resolute seizure of the "decisive 'instant'" to support the Nazis (Wolin, 1993, 140-4).

While not stating so explicitly, Löwith strongly indicates that Heidegger's Dasein is best equated to the pagan Greek hero delineated by Rosenzweig in *The Star*.[40] In book III of part I, entitled 'Man and His Self, or Metaethics', Rosenzweig begins to reconstruct human selfhood from the point of infinitesimal nothingness. The first stage is called 'personality' [*Personlichkeit*], denoting the everyday self lacking individuation and determined by social roles and conceptions. The second stage of the self is 'Character' [*Charakter*], i.e., radical inwardness, which is "metaethical" because the individual does not participate in any universal genus or category. The metaethical person is configured as the Greek tragic hero, "mute as a marble" and shut off from fellow humans and God (Rosenzweig, 1972, 207). Soul [*Seele*], the third stage of the self's development, is introduced by the event of revelation as speech, which shatters the hermetic world of the Greek hero. In Rosenzweig's depiction, revelation is the bridge between self-enclosed personhood and the relationality with one's fellow person. Subjectivity and inter-subjectivity fully emerge in revelation, as it brings about the discovery of dialogue and love - the demand to love God and through it the awakening to 'love thy neighbor'. Accordingly, in this reading Heidegger is a pagan, and hence between the three irreducible elements of God, man, and world that Rosenzweig posits in his *magnum opus*, the affiliation with Heidegger pertains to the element of man alone.

This reading has some strengths to it: it identifies a reference point in Rosenzweig's thought that appears to accommodate Heidegger's position and *also* prepares for its overcoming, it echoes the common labeling of paganism to Heidegger, and it grounds his ethical and political shortcomings in a philosophico-theological point. It is, of course, misguided in binding Heideger's ontological concerns with regards to Dasein and the meaning of being to Rosenweig's ontic concern over the relations between God, world, and man (Franks, 2006). Yet even from within the perspective of *Existenzphilosophie*, the difficulty with interpreting Dasein as Rosenzweig's pagan hero is that

[40] A similar reading is suggested by Cohen (1994, 40-66).

Rosenzweig's pagan is a pre-revelation person, while the depiction of Dasein in Löwith's influential reading is the result of the secularization of a particular Protestant legacy. To put it in the language of Heidegger's early Christian reception, Rosenzweig's pagan hero is *vorglauben*, while Heidegger's Dasein, as interpreted by Löwith himself, is *unglauben*. This is a crucial point, for according to Löwith, Heidegger is a "godless theologian" and his hybrid programme betrays a "fundamentally anti-Christian and altogether irreligious purport", but it is at the same time "though inexplicitly, living on the Christian 'saeculum' and failing to dechristanize it" (Löwith, 1942, 67, 64).[41] Dasein's "entanglement of death, guilt, and conscience in an existence responsible only to itself means, it is true, an eradication of these concepts from their Christian sphere of origin, but on this very account they are still related to it" (68). Heidegger's secularized programme is to his deficit, Löwith believes, for not only is his objection to eternity nihilistic, but his inability to thoroughly release himself from his Christian legacy deems his project impractical: Heidegger attempts to do something with a set of concepts that will inevitably resist and pull to the opposite direction. In contrast, Löwith attributes Rosenzweig's "happy position of being able to hold up David's star of eternal truth in the midst of time" to his Jewish inheritance (75-6). Rosenzweig's view of eternity-in-the-world as exhibited in Jewish self-perpetuation through procreation is faithfully presented and situated between the "Greek and Christian tradition", wherein "true being was set in the Eternal or 'always present'" and human temporality is discredited, and Heidegger's wholesale temporalization of existence and animosity towards eternity.[42] Löwith thus depicts Rosenzweig as presenting a post-metaphysical Jewish philosophy that is absorbed in the concrete temporal world without succumbing to the paganism and nihilism of Heidegger's secularized Christianity.

By encapsulating the differences between Heidegger and Rosenzweig in the distinction between religious eternity and secularized temporality as Löwith does, it would appear that Heidegger is a secularized Rosenzweig or Rosenzweig a theologized Heidegger, and revelation is what separates them (Moyn, 2006a). But this cannot be the case, for Löwith emphasizes Heidegger's secularized Christianity

[41] Cf. Löwith's remark (1994, 47) that Heidegger is "a theologian by tradition, and an atheist as a scholar".
[42] Löwith does not attribute to Rosenzweig the metaphysical concept of eternity, and hence by no means forces him back into "the dogmas of Platonic idealism he wished to escape", as claimed by Gordon (2003, 20). Any grievance about the appearance of eternity in *The Star* is to be directed at Rosenzweig, not Löwith.

and celebrates Rosenzweig's Jewish perspective. And if, as Löwith claimed earlier, there is an intrinsic tendency towards secularization in Protestantism that is typified in Heidegger – a tendency to which Rosenzweig's Jewish outlook is immune - then it follows that their differences do not pertain solely to revelation, as Löwith maintains, but rather stem from deeper theological impulses that are played out in both thinkers.

Inserting another relevant figure into the discussion, the swiss theologian Karl Barth, can demonstrate that the focus on eternity and revelation is insufficient to account for the differences between Heidegger and Rosenzweig, even from within Löwith's perspective. In many respects, these three thinkers are products of the discontent from nineteenth century philosophical liberalism, Neo-Kantianism, and historicism, and they all formed innovative works of thought that were associated at the time with the perspective of *Existenzphilosophie*. Löwith even mentions Barth's name briefly in a footnote explaining 'new thinking', illustrating the shared theoretical context of the three thinkers. However, Barth and his parallels with Rosenzweig are otherwise out of Löwith's sight in this essay. This is curious, for the fundamental presumptions he admits Heidegger and Rosenzweig share and which make their existential breakthrough possible are precisely the points Löwith himself had identified as grounded in Protestant theology and link dialectical theology and Heidegger. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Barth's specific theological commitments in his early *Römerbrief* period bear some resemblances to Heidegger, and indeed they were sometimes read together – first and foremost, by Löwith himself. There are also strong parallels between Rosenzweig and Barth, as both channel their critique of nineteenth century liberal theology to produce a theocentric theology stressing divine otherness and a robust account of revelation (Herskowitz, 2017a). They too are recurrently compared (Rashkover, 2005, Funkenstein, 1993; Myers, 2003, 94-100; Moyn, 2006b, 113-63; Busch, 2015, 151-69).

This is certainly a charged intellectual triangle. Rosenzweig was sympathetic to Heidegger's perspective but fiercely critical of Barth. Heidegger' expressed early appreciation for Barth (as reported by Löwith) but this appreciation quickly dwindled. Barth disapproved of Heidegger's entire philosophical project. Heidegger had not heard of Rosenzweig until much later on, and Barth admits to having a merely perfunctory familiarity with the Jewish thinker's work (Barth, 1981, 262; Busch, 2011,

435).[43] Yet considering Barth together with Heidegger and Rosenzweig allows us to see that the heart of the matter is not merely the acceptance of eternity and revelation. To recall, Heidegger does not reject revelation *per say*; he only situates it in the domain of faith, outside the domain entrusted to philosophy. In this respect at least, while coming from opposite sides, Heidegger and (early) Barth are in agreement. But while there is no exaggerating the centrality of "the offensive idea of revelation", as Rosenzweig's called it in his early 1914 essay "Atheistische Theologie", to his system as a whole, he nevertheless becomes critical of the Protestant theological trend he openly associates with Barth, which in his view overstates the 'offensiveness' of revelation and attributes to it exclusive theological significance (Rosenzweig, 1984a, 697/ Franks and Morgan, 2000, 10-24; Herskowitz, 2017a). Rosenzweig's claims that "the Barthian colossal negations" is a deprived theology unworthy of Christianity that ultimately amounts to Gnosticism and Marcionism. Indeed, he expressly perceived himself a 'missionary' against the recent prominence of these perspectives (Rosenzweig, 1979, 876, 1055-6; Pollock, 2014). Moreover, dialectical theology's strict divorce of faith and reason disregards the fact that "there is only one truth" (1937, 131-2). That these critiques are applicable to Heidegger as well raises the possibility that had Rosenzweig had a better overview of Heidegger's positions, he would have been as critical of him as he was of Barth, and for similar reasons.

In chapter 3 we will have occasion to expand on the Jewish reading of the Heidegger-Barth bond. For now, however, our discussion demonstrates that from Rosenzweig's point of view, the main issue is not only eternity and revelation, but rather a cluster of theological premises pertaining to the co-belonging of philosophy and theology, revelation and creation, and reason and faith. Heidegger and Barth, from reverse directions, both hold a separationist position whereby God has no place in the philosophical discourse, while Rosenzweig believes that philosophy has something to learn from theology. Unlike Barth and Heidegger, Rosenzweig espouses a God who is *Der Fern-Und-Nahe* (1984b, 68-71/ Galli, 1995, 204-6) and advocates for an anti-compartmentalized, harmonizing position of *gläubiges Wissen*, which attempts to overcome the clefts between philosophy and theology and offer a schematization of their co-belonging.

[43] Barth and Rosenzweig shared early ties to the Patmos group. On this see Busch (2015, 158-166) and Galli (1995, 302-3).

This crucial difference notwithstanding, Löwith's chiseled distinction between Rosenzweig's Judaism over against Heidegger's secularized Christianity is over simplified and overlooks the decisive mark of Protestant theology on the Jewish thinker. And note: In his earlier essays on the Christian origins of Heidegger's philosophy, Löwith stresses the shared departure points and presuppositions of Protestant theology and fundamental ontology, despite the secularized character of the latter. With respect to Rosenzweig, on the other hand, he acknowledges the shared departure point with Heidegger, but then quickly moves on to underscore the discrepancies in their final destinations and announces them to be fundamentally opposing. In both cases, the logic at play is the same, but in his early essay, the motivation is to affiliate, while in his later essay, it is to divorce. Why this is so is subject to speculation, but it is likely that the desire to distance Rosenzweig from Heidegger is grounded in a symbolic binary of German versus Jew and driven by extra-philosophical motivations, such as Löwith's personal animus towards Heidegger after 1933.

For a long time, Löwith's essay had set the tone for any discussion of these two thinkers. This is true especially, though not exclusively, of Jewish thinkers wishing to disassociate Rosenzweig, who had quickly cultivated a heliographic status in the Jewish imagination, and Heidegger, the Nazi collaborator. A case to point in this regard is Else Freund's aforementioned study. As stated, in the German edition, written before Heidegger publicly supported Hitler, she readily points to the two men's resemblances and explains them through their shared participation in *Existenzphilosophie* and its conceptual affinity to theology. At this point, she admits that Heidegger's relation to theology "is not yet clear". In the subsequent 1972 Hebrew edition and the 1979 English edition, this passage is revised. Explicitly mentioning Löwith's essay and repeating its argument, in these later editions Freund claims that Heidegger's stance regarding theology and God is definitive: "human existence in the case of Heidegger remains closed in finiteness and temporality and has no relationship to a human Thou, to the world or to God", she writes, placing him in contrast to Rosenzweig (1979, 145-6). Also Hans Liebeschütz, whose contestation to Rosenzweig's affiliation with Heidegger was noted above, cites Löwith's essay.[44]

[44] Löwith's work is also mentioned in the expanded English edition of Julius Gutmann's impactful study (1964, 527-8). Gutmann writes: "Löwith sets the atheistic existentialism of Heidegger against the believing existentialism of Rosenzweig and proves that Heidegger remains within the sphere of temporality, while Rosenzweig transcends it and points toward eternity".

Likewise, Nathan Rotenstreich, the prominent Israeli philosopher and scholar, attends to the comparison between Rosenzweig and Heidegger (1949, 205-6). Also mentioning Löwith, he contends that despite superficial affinities between the two thinkers, when perceived through the perspective of their stance toward transcendence, it becomes clear that not Heidegger but Karl Jaspers would be a more appropriate comparison with Rosenzweig. Jaspers constructs an *Existenzphilosophie* focused on the experience of freedom marked by what he called limit-situations [*Grenzsituationen*]. In these critical situations we become aware of our limited subjectivity and historicity and direct ourselves beyond the limited immanence of our existence towards transcendence. Rotenstreich judges that "the affinity between Rosenzweig and Jaspers should be stressed more than that between Rosenzweig and Heidegger, because the unique aspect of Jasper's account is seeing the relation to transcendence as a relation that determines the existential quality of man" (ibid).[45] Like Rosenzweig but unlike Heidegger, Jaspers includes in the constitution of human existence the possibility of "leaping-out of immanence, a leap made by man in his way from the world to God". Rotenstreich avers that "it is obvious that this point", shared by Jaspers and Rosenzweig, "can anchor conclusions of faith". The two philosophers differ, he notes, in that Jaspers speaks of a unilateral leap into transcendence while Rosenzweig describes a dialogical communication between God and human. In contrast to them, Heidegger's framework is confined to the boundaries of immanence and finitude. The distinction presented here is simple: Rosenzweig and Jaspers accommodate transcendence, while Heidegger does not.

Also following Löwith in disputing Rosenzweig's association with Heidegger is Leo Strauss in his 1965 "Preface to the English Translation" to his book on Spinoza, where he confronts Rosenzweig and Heidegger. In Strauss's analysis, the former represents a new thinking based on the experience of God, while the latter rejects revelation and does not experience God (on this see chapter 5). In a similar manner, Martin Buber supports his critique of Heidegger's monological account of language in his "The Word that is Spoken", a paper presented in a conference he organized with Heidegger, by making the point stressed by Löwith that in Rosenzweig divine revelation enables human speech (see chapter 4).[46]

[45] For a comparative analysis of Jaspers on religion and theology, see Thornhill (2002,119-69).

[46] Buber writes: "It is through God's addressing man – Franz Rosenzweig's *Stern der Erlösung* teaches us - that He established man in speech" (1988, 105).

A similar dynamic is discernible in Emmanuel Levinas as well. Levinas's first major work, *Totality and Infinity*, is an assault on Heidegger's ground rule that "ontology is first philosophy". In the introduction to this work Levinas writes that "we were impressed by the opposition to the idea of totality in Franz Rosenzweig's *Stern der Erlösung*, a work too often present in this book to be cited" (1969, 28). Without entering into the dispute over the accuracy of Levinas's interpretation of Rosenzweig or Heidegger, two points can be drawn out from this statement. First, that Levinas parallels his attempt to overcome what he sees as Heidegger's totalitarian philosophy with Rosenzweig's attempt to overcome what he sees as Hegel's totalitarian philosophy. It follows from this analogy that Heidegger, like Hegel, espouses the logic of representation, reductionism, and ingrained violence of 'old thinking'. This is contrary to Rosenzweig's view, which effectively positions Heidegger *against* Hegel. Second, that rather than associating Rosenzweig and Heidegger, Levinas pits them against each other. As we shall see, a central element of Levinas's philosophical effort is to confront what he learned from Rosenzweig, that "Jewish existence is a category of being" (1990, 183), with what he calls the Heideggerian pagan category of being (see chapter 7). It can also be added that a main impulse in Emil Fackenheim's main work of post-Holocaust theology, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (1982), builds on Löwith's analysis of Rosenzweig and Heidegger. With respect to the possibility of their grappling with the rapturous *Ereignis* of our time, the Holocaust, Fackenheim writes:

> "Rosenzweig dies prior to the advent of the Nazi regime; Heidegger survived it long enough to have all the leisure necessary to ponder it. Rosenzweig's thought, though situated in history, rose above it, and hence also above the evil that is part of it; Heidegger's thought in both its earlier and later periods remains in history, unable to rise above it. Yet it is Heidegger's thought that cannot confront the Holocaust; and it is Rosenzweig's thought that – had the thinker lived long enough – would have found a confrontation with the *Ereignis* inescapable" (1994, 320).

As these examples illustrate, until recently the overarching attempt has been to disassociate Heidegger from Rosenzweig. This is at variance with the Jewish thinker's self-professed partnership with Heidegger, but it is driven by the indicated assumption that Rosenzweig's ignorance of important theological and political elements in Heidegger's philosophy and life can explain his misjudgment.

It is important to recognize, however, that the apprehension with regards to Heidegger is more than post-traumatism, and what is at stake is more than the accuracy of Rosenzweig's testament. What is at stake, rather, is the promises and perils of post-metaphysical religious thought. In this respect, both

Cassirer and Löwith were entirely correct in identifying *Geworfenheit* and temporality as fundamental themes in the religious grappling with Heidegger. Does the crisis of reason hold in store Heideggerian nihilism and totalitarianism, as Cassirer and others warn? Is intersubjectivity, morality, and humanism possible after the radical plunge into history and temporality? Is God possible at all after the jettisoning of eternal truths? Does the rejection of metaphysics require or resist secularization? One might phrase the animating concern as follows: Can one begin with Rosenzweig without necessarily ending up with Heidegger?

Conclusion

This chapter illustrated how the divided intellectual landscape of Weimar played itself out in the early Jewish receptions of Heidegger. The decline of the worldview represented by Neo-Kantianism and the rise of the worldview represented by Heidegger was taken as either an attack on what is most valuable in Judaism or as an opportunity to develop an authentic Judaism. Representing this split, as we have seen, are Cassirer and Rosenzweig. That Cassirer referred to Heidegger as foe to his vision of philosophy and Judaism should come as no surprise. Yet the reception of Rosenzweig's endorsement of Heidegger exhibits the confrontational structure between Judaism and Heidegger's philosophy that will mark the modeling of this encounter. Central to the confrontational model is the sense that Heidegger's philosophy is both grounded in, and itself grounds, a religious picture, and that at the heart of his philosophical and personal deficiencies lay a theological fault. This point will be picked up in the following chapter, where we explore a recurring early Jewish reading of *Sein und Zeit*, according to which this work does not detail the existential structures of Dasein as such, but rather that of a specific secularized Christian or Protestant Dasein, and as such has little bearings on being-Jewish.

Chapter 3: A Christian Anthropology? Early Jewish Readings of *Sein und Zeit*

Introduction

The present chapter explores early Jewish interpretations of Heidegger's philosophy as exhibiting specific Christian presuppositions regarding human existence. As we have seen in chapter 1, the question of the significance and role of the theological undertones in Heidegger's Dasein analytic is central to its early Christian reception. From a common Jewish standpoint, whether or not Heidegger's thought harbors layers of Christian theology may affect the possibility of its productivity for Jewish expression. Accordingly, one way to display its inappropriateness for Jewish thought is to uncover its Christian resonances, while establishing its potential suitability for Jewish thought would require reading it as a theologically neutral portrayal of human existence. Either way, the question of secularization must be confronted. Does the de-theologization and ontologization of Christian notions in the existential analysis of Dasein result in a universally valid and neutral existential structure which can potentially illuminate being-Jewish? Or is something of their religious origin inevitably preserved, so that regardless of the absence of any explicit Christian message, Heidegger's system is stamped by a foreign doctrine and as such at odds with Judaism? As we shall see, the Jewish reactions to Heidegger's secularized vocabulary reflects on broader issues concerning the theological charge of modern secularism. Is the main impulse of modern secularism anti-Christian, or is it in fact a particularly Christian phenomenon? What is the stand of Judaism with regards to secularism? Does secularism have political ramifications? As will become clear in this chapter, the Jewish grappling with Heidegger between the wars takes place within the wider discourse of the polemic against Christianity and struggle for self-assertion, and thus reflects a moment in the Jewish understanding of the Jewish-Christian difference.

Sein und Zeit: A Christian Anthropology?

One of the early detailed Jewish engagements with Heidegger's philosophy is offered by Raphael Seligmann in a 12-page article entitled "Sein oder Nichtsein: Zu Heideggers Existenzphilosophie"

(1932).[47] Lauding *Sein und Zeit* as a "notable" and "serious" work, Seligmann outlines an organized and at times critical elucidation of some fundamental notions of Heidegger's thought. Throughout his philosophical analysis, Seligmann acknowledges some theological undertones present in the work. For example, he contends that one of the central sources of the exposition of Dasein's existence is 'the original sin'. "This idea", he writes, "reverberates essentially in Heidegger's concept of Guilt [*Schuld*]: I am already sinful from the very moment of my birth, and I am already guilty from the very moment of my thrownness" (ibid, 437). Moreover, "the idea of the Original Sin is the *spiritus rector* of this philosophy of existence" (ibid). By pointing to this Christian debt, Seligmann indicates that Heidegger's account of Dasein's existence is conditioned by a Christian belief in the inherent sinfulness of human existence. This becomes more evident in another essay composed in Hebrew around 1934, where Seligmann reiterates this point and interprets Heidegger's notion of thrownness and guilt in terms of "sin and transgression". Here it is claimed that Dasein's guilt does not surface in light of transgression or moral deficiency, since for him "sin precedes morality". One is always already guilty and sinful, and the birth of morality is the moment one is awakened to this fact (Seligmann, 1955, 135-42). Yet Seligmann claims that Heidegger's assumptions "are wrong": Ontologically, Dasein is *not* always already sinful, and guilt is not implicit to Dasein's existence. One becomes guilty only in light of one's actions. Guilt and sin are existential possibilities open to any person, but they are outcomes of deeds rather than fundamental ontological features of our being-in-the-world. One can easily discern the echoes of the Jewish polemic against the Christian notion of Original Sin in Seligmann's philosophical critique of Heidegger's existential analysis.

This brief acknowledgment of theological layers at play in Heidegger is picked up and developed by Hugo Shmuel Bergmann. Bergmann left Europe for Palestine already in 1920, but his intellectual pulse remained deeply attuned to the European scene. Geographically removed from the furor around the publication of *Sein und Zeit*, Bergmann was nevertheless fairly up-to-date philosophically. A file in his archives entitled "Heidegger, Sein u. Zeit" holds handwritten comments and thoughts on Heidegger dating back to at least August of 1931. In the academic year of 1931/1932 he delivered a lecture course

[47] Seligmann penned two additional articles dedicated exclusively to Heidegger, as well as other pieces of personal philosophical musing that attest to Heideggerian influences. See his (1955).

on ‘Existentialism’ in the newly found Hebrew University, consisting of five lectures on Kierkegaard, two on Dilthey and seven on Heidegger (SHBA, 4*1502 04 101b). This is a striking but widely unknown historical fact: the newly established Hebrew University in Palestine is one of the first places in the world where Heidegger’s thought was taught in an academic setting as a significant philosophical milestone.[48]

In Bergmann’s work on contemporary philosophers, *Hogey Ha’Dor* (Bergmann, 1935), the chapter dedicated to Heidegger is the lengthiest and most elaborate. Labeled as “typifying the younger school of thought in Germany today” (122), Bergmann claims Heidegger’s philosophy - paradigmatically existentialist - is animated by a deeply secularized religiosity. “The gates of the heavens are not open for this kind of religiosity”, he states. “The painful spur of religion drives it, yet it does not accept religion’s consolations” (ibid). Bergmann offers an overview of central themes in *Sein und Zeit* which is sensitive to the de-theologized vocabulary in Heidegger’s existential analysis and its general religious ambience. He interprets, for example, Dasein’s quest for existential meaning as an unattainable religious desire for transcendence in a technical, godless, and ultimately finite world, in which “the gates of the heavens are locked shut, no path leads upwards”. Dasein’s thrownness also reflects the godlessness of Heidegger’s world, according to Bergmann. “Who threw him into this world and what is found beyond his birth and death? To this question there is no answer, and the question is not even asked in the first place” (122-3).

Similarly, Heidegger’s ‘call of consciousness’ is understood as a form of existential repentance: It calls Dasein for *Teshuva*, to return to itself from within the alienating idle talk of *das Man*. To highlight its religious connotations, Bergmann illustrates its affinity to the revelatory call in the Bible by relating it to God’s call to Abraham and to Samuel. He is aware, however, that despite its religious overtones, explaining the call through recourse to “divine forces or theological explanations” is a mistake. This is not a call “coming from another world” or a “divine epiphany [*bat kol*]” (123); the bursting call of consciousness is voiceless and empty, emerging from within, not from without. It is a circular, short-

[48] For some background on the philosophical scene in Palestine at the time through the prism of reactions to Heidegger, see: Kenaan, Rottem, and Barnea (2012).

circuiting, secularized call wherein Dasein calls upon itself. Bergmann also interprets the notion of Guilt as a de-theologized existential sin. Inauthentic Dasein "can err", he writes, "but it is unworthy of sin". Conversely, "only whoever resolves its authentic being can also bear sin […] Sin is the testimony for the ability of Dasein's being-itself" (152). Like Seligmann, Bergmann points out that existential "sin does not originate in a particular action or lack of a particular action" for Heidegger. Unrelated to the believer's being-toward-God, to divine law, or to "a specific action or lack of specific action", Heidegger's notion of existential sin "is an existential predicate pertaining to the very root of existence, because existence in its foundation is knotted in negation. The 'no' is an inseparable element of man" (153).

Yet Bergmann makes clear that this view of the overarching negation looming over Dasein's finite and fallen existence is hardly neutral. It springs from "the Christian teaching, and in particular the Protestant Christian idea of original sin that is bequeathed from Adam finds its philosophical expression here. Man is sinful in his essence" (ibid). Indeed, Bergmann explicitly flags the mark of "Kierkegaard and Protestant religion in general" (123) on Heidegger's early work. Following the interpretive trend of reading Heidegger as a secularized Kierkegaard, Bergmann singles out the secularization of Kierkegaard's notions of Repetition [*Gjentagelsen*] and the Moment [*Øieblikket*] in Heidegger's *Wiederholung* and *Augenblick* to demonstrate the similarities and differences between the two thinkers (Herskowitz, 2017c). "Kierkegaard's thought is entirely fastened to faith", he determines, "while Heidegger constructs his system without a God" (155). If divine grace within a life of faith offers an outlet to existential salvation in the Kierkegaardian scheme, the godlessness of Dasein's resoluteness "cannot brighten the dark element and passive root of our existence, and does not eliminate the *nothing*, the negation, for we have been *thrown* into life" (ibid). Through juxtaposing Heidegger with Kierkegaard, Bergmann stresses both the former's Christian heritage and lack of theological neutrality, but also the secularized, godless character of his philosophy. The theological ambiguity marking Heidegger's secularized formulations betrays the post-Nietzschean spiritual crisis. "The profound seriousness of this system is due to this religiosity", although it promotes a "religiosity without God" (165). It is clear that in Bergmann's understanding, Heidegger's godless religiosity is rooted in, and

only explained by, his Christian-Protestant legacy. Repeating the point made by Cassirer (and others), he asserts that Heidegger's framework is constituted by an adoption of the negative moments of Protestant anthropology – the fallen, sinful, guilty, finite and anxiety-fraught human existence - without its complementing affirmative moments of glory and redemption in divine eternity. Thus, while doing away with faith's redemptive aspects, Heidegger retains, in a philosophical register, this tradition's account of original sin and overarching 'no' marking human existence. In the final analysis, Bergmann argues, Dasein of *Sein und Zeit* is a de-Christianized Dasein, and Heidegger's account of resoluteness is an updated form of Nietzsche's atheistic ideal of *amor fati* wherein one's fate is chosen resolutely. As we shall see, the link between Heidegger's Protestant legacy and reference to Kierkegaard, the godlessness of his system, and Nietzschean atheism will re-emerge in the Jewish reception of Heidegger in this period.[49]

The full import of Bergmann's reading of Heidegger comes to light when the structure of his book is taken into account. The chapters of *Hogey Ha'Dor* are dedicated to various philosophical attempts to address the crisis of objectivity and subjectivity bequeathed by Kant. Within this outline, *Sein und Zeit* is addressed as one serious but ultimately flawed post-Kantian existential stance. Significantly, Bergmann believes that the Kantian problematic has in fact found a suitable solution in Cohen's notion of the 'correlation' between the human and the divine, as presented in his late Jewish work, to which the concluding chapter of Bergmann's book is dedicated. "The problem of knowing, that is, of according the world and our reason", Bergmann explains Cohen's view, "can be solved only by the view that the world and human reason were both created by divine reason. We can know the world and reason because the world was created, and we were created in the image of God" (11). There is no question for Bergmann that Cohen's later philosophical developments are profoundly linked to his personal return to Judaism. He specifically stresses the 'Jewishness' of Cohen's philosophical proposal by stating that not the younger Cohen, engulfed by Kant's anti-religious idealism, but only "the elderly Cohen, who returned to his Judaism", would have dared to recognize the God-human correlation, thereby upholding divine transcendence and at the same time promulgating an account of human existence that is not

[49] For the reception of Kierkegaard by Jewish intellectuals at the time, see Nowotny (2016).

inextricably marred by negation. The Kantian schism between man and world is overcome through the Jewish teaching of their shared divine origin. Significantly, Bergmann proclaims that Cohen's philosophical contribution "from the sources of Judaism" exhibits that Judaism "still bears a message to the entire world" (224). It thus becomes clear that uncovering the Christian layers in Heidegger's framework plays into the overarching trajectory of Bergmann's book. For ultimately, his Christian anthropology is rejected in the stead of (a Rosenzweigian reading of) Cohen's Jewish thinking.

Heidegger and Dialectical Theology: A Jewish Perspective

As noted above, reading Heidegger in light of Kierkegaard and as a secularized version thereof was hardly uncommon at the time. Heidegger and Barth - who too was taken by the Danish philosopher and his emphasis on the 'infinite qualitative difference' between God and humanity (Barrett, 2012) - were similarly often juxtaposed. Despite the fact that they depart from different premises and lead dramatically dissimilar paths – for the one anthropocentrism, for the other theocentrism, here philosophy, there theology - many understood the bracketing of God in Heidegger's scheme and subsequent depiction of a godless world, to correspond, from the perspective of philosophy, to the position of *Deus absconditus* exhibited in Barth's radical theology. Indeed, not only were the ties between the philosophical project of *Existenzphilosophie* and Protestant theology acknowledged by many, the very term *Existenzphilosophie* labelled both Heidegger's perspective and dialectical theology (Baring, 2015b).[50] This is indicated, for example, by Walter Benjamin, who writes of Barthian theology in the beginning of his review of Adorno's monograph *Kierkegaard. Konstruktion des Ästhetischen* (1933), that "at their outer limits the waves of this theological movement make contact with the concentric circles set in motion by Heidegger's existential philosophy" (Benjamin, 1999, 703).

Albert Lewkowitz, a liberal rabbi who taught philosophy in the Breslau Jewish Theological Seminar, offers an elaborate interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy, reflecting on its ties to Christianity, dialectical theology, and secularism. Lewkowitz is typical of the younger Jewish generation that was critical of the amalgamation of Kantianism and Judaism and believed in turning to metaphysical and

[50] In an article on his mentor and friend Martin Buber, Ernst Simon (1934, 311) somewhat inadvertently speaks of "dialectical theology and its godless sister, existential philosophy".

ontological categories for the restoration of authentic Jewish spirituality (Lewkowitz, 1923; 1928). Yet he, like some, refused Heidegger's path for the sake of doing so. In his 1936 essay, "Vom Sinn des Sein: zum Existenzpholosophie Heideggers", Lewkowitz situates Heidegger's fundamental ontology within an apparent contrast between Nietzsche's nihilistic and atheistic will to power on the one side, and dialectical theology, associated with Kierkegaard, Barth and Gogarten, on the other (Lewkowitz, 1936a; cf. also [1935]). While the contrast is commonplace, Lewkowitz contends, it in fact is deceptive, for both sides share a denial of the human ability to know the truth and both demand irrationality and submission. In ostensible contrast to them, "the existential philosophy [*Existenzphilosophie*] of Heidegger" reinforces human capacity for truth, as it "sees its fundamental task in the ontological illumination of the being of beings". It should be noticed that Heidegger's thought is positioned within the overtly religious context of Nietzsche's atheism and Barth's theism. And indeed, Lewkowitz points to the theological terminology grounding the analysis of Dasein and to Heidegger's connection to Kierkegaard: "The terms care, anxiety, guilt, conscience, *Augenblick*, remembrance, repetition, in which Heidegger records the essence of existence are central concepts for Kierkegaard and through them a deep influence of Kierkegaard on Heidegger is recognized" (193). Moreover, "as it is in Christian theology", he notes, "also for Heidegger death, guilt and conscience are deeply intertwined" (194). However, Lewkowitz is well aware of the secularized setting within which these terms are invoked. "It cannot be overlooked", he observes, "that in Heidegger these concepts are completely rescinded from the atmosphere of Pauline theology which permeates Kierkegaard" (193). Like Protestant theology, Heidegger's system offers an all-encompassing framework that presents both Dasein's existential predicament and its path to existential salvation, using similar categories. Unlike its theistic source, however, for Heidegger, "not the theological teaching of salvation shows man his guilt and the way to overcome it, but rather the resoluteness of anxiety in face of the nothing brings man to the truth of his awareness of being" (ibid). Fixed in immanence, the path to salvation proposed by the German philosopher "is not over-worldly, other-worldly, religious, but rather the free affirmation of fateful destiny". Heidegger's thought, Lewkowitz determines, is "a secularized Protestant style of theology" (ibid). Establishing the constitutive role of this theological legacy in Heidegger's philosophy allows Lewkowitz to argue that while seemingly offering a distinct position, Heidegger is in fact one

with dialectic theology and Nietzsche. The unbridgeable distant God of dialectical theology, Nietzsche's 'dead' God, and Heidegger's secularized description of human godforsakenness are one and the same.

But what interests Lewkowitz is the moral ramifications of a worldview lacking a transcendent anchor and compass in God. Since the call of conscience is Dasein's call to itself, and its being-toward-death solidifies its solitude, then "no ray of the idea of moral being [*sittlichen Seins*]" can penetrate Dasein's impenetrable existence. "Heidegger seeks to yield a phenomenological analysis of human existence that would lead human beings to meaningful freedom. But without the realm of value upon which human beings are based in all concreteness of values and human existence, human beings are left in darkness" (194). Morality is impossible in the world depicted by Heidegger. In final analysis, Kierkegaard, Barth, Gogarten, Nietzsche, and Heidegger are all cut from the same cloth, and all effectively bespeak a nihilistic account of human forsakenness. Thus, hardly able to offer a spiritual antidote, Heidegger in fact perpetuates the crisis of the times because his philosophy stems from the same nihilistic assumptions of Protestantism's radical externality of God. The leading religious systems and the leading secular philosophies are both rooted in this tradition's theological assumptions.

Unlike Bergmann, whose strictly philosophical discussion made only a brief mention of Heidegger's ties to the "German revolution of 1933", for Lewkowitz Heidegger's endorsement of extreme German nationalism exhibits the dire ethical pitfalls that the absence of a divine compass has in store. Making the connection between Heidegger's philosophy and politics, Lewkowitz marshals Heidegger's rectorial address as evidence for the moral deficiency of his thought.[51] Since Heidegger barricaded transcendent values and meaning out of Dasein's existence, then "heroic nationalism […] is for Heidegger life's last meaning", ~~he maintains~~. "This barrier against the realm of values and its transcendent roots in God threatens to naturalize National Socialism. Have we not returned to Nietzsche's Productive Nihilism?" Reading Heidegger's philosophy as a secularized Christian theology impervious to the possibility of morality suggests a connection between nihilism, its extreme

[51] On the reception of Heidegger's rectorial address, see Zaborowski (2009).

contemporary Nazi manifestation, and Christianity. With this indirect connection, Lewkowitz insinuates that Nazism is made possible by this Christian worldview. We shall encounter the argument linking Heidegger's politics to the immanence of his worldview in forthcoming chapters as well. But its flimsy logic must be flagged at the outset: It does not explain why the same position led others to reject Hitler.

In contrast to Heidegger and his theologically-grounded nihilism, Lewkowitz posits the Jewish message of "the concrete substantiality of an enlightened moral idea and its fulfilling spiritual life. 'The human's spirit is the candle of God'". In Heidegger's view, as Lewkowitz interprets it, the meaning of true being is attained through *memento mori*, and this is contrasted to "the moral interpretation of Being through Judaism", according to which "the knowledge of the good, the knowledge of God" is the path to "true being, true life". For Lewkowitz, regardless of their diverging assumptions and methods, the Bible, the Midrash, as well as medieval and modern Jewish philosophy all unite around one fundamental message, namely, the necessity "to understand and shape the world out of God" (195). With these concluding remarks, Lewkowitz situates Judaism as a corrective to Heidegger's de-christianized philosophy. "The philosophy of existence will become the true philosophy of human existence only if it accentuates the meaningful relatedness of human spirit to the realm of values" (ibid). This statement is to be read as an imploration for a 'Jewish' corrective to German philosophy and in particular to Heidegger, who "stands in contrast to the […] religious Weltanschauung" (1936b). But it also serves as a warning against the extreme nationalism and the moral pitfalls that will befall Germany if it does away with this Jewish principle. Even in the mid-1930s and even after turning his back on the rationalism of liberal Judaism, Lewkowitz believes that the Jewish message, as he construes it, holds the spiritual remedy for the nihilism-inflected German society.

Lewkowitz's argument against Heidegger and his reference to Pauline theology and Barthianism could be understood as an instance in the Jewish reactions to the re-emergence of views that at the time were collected under the blanket-terms of Gnosticism or Marcionism.[52] A recurring theme in this context was

[52] These terms were taken to be interchangeable, although this has been contested ever since. See for instance Williams (1996). An early discussion of the difficulty of making sense of the dualisms at play in Heidegger's

counteracting the Gnostic rift between God and the world with the 'Jewish' position that upholds divine transcendence without forfeiting the connection with immanence. This is evident in Lewkowitz's essay and was a common rejoinder to the theologies of Barth and Gogarten. In the contemporary political and cultural horizon, the anti-Judaism of the Marcionite tradition paired-up with the increasing anti-Semitism. The link between Heidegger's philosophy and his notorious political affiliation, as Lewkowitz points out, fits this pattern.

The Gnostic ambiance in Heidegger and Barth was also of much concern for Hans Jonas, who composed a philosophical analysis of Gnosticism for his doctorate dissertation under Heidegger's supervision (Jonas, 2003,108-28; Wiese, 2007; Wasserstorm, 2010).[53] Unlike prior scholarship on the theme of late antiquity Gnostic traditions, Jonas's philosophical investigation treats Gnosticism as an attitude or stance of human existence [*Daseinhaltung*] in the world. He distils from the multiple manifestations of Gnosticism a unifying pessimistic cosmic dualism according to which the world is a dark and fallen realm, completely abandoned by a far-removed God. In his analysis, Jonas draws substantially on the Heideggerian philosophical lexicon to articulate what he construed as the existential features of this dualistic doctrine. He openly writes in the introduction that "our undertaking will draw to a large extent on an already crafted ontology of Dasein" as put forth by Heidegger "especially in the work *Sein und Zeit*" (9). The human being, in Jonas's Heideggerian delineation of the early Gnostic view, is thrown into an uncanny and dreadful world from which the sole path to redemption is by means of *Gnosis*, the secret knowledge that liberates the soul from the world. Alongside thrownness [*Geworfenheit*], Jonas also offers the notions fallenness [*Verfallenheit*], dread [*Angst*] and being-abandoned [*Verlorensein*] as hermeneutical keys to express the unbridgeable gap between divine transcendence and the fallen and alienated state of human existence in a devalued world.[54]

otherwise monistic framework is offered by Marck (1929, 1931, 160-5). Seligmann draws on and develops Marck's discussion.

[53] Part of which were published as Jonas (1934). The second section, entitled *Von der Mythologie zur mystischen Philosophie*, was published by the same publishing house in 1954. The English translation of these works (Jonas, 1958) is a significantly abridged version and lacks the deep-seated Heideggerian inflection of the original German.

[54] Jonas's influential construct of Gnosticism has since come under considerable attack. See, for instance, Williams (1996)*;* Waldstein (2000); and King (1994).

For our concerns, it is significant that in his intervention in the scholarly debate over the question of the origins of Gnostic theology – at the time, the suggestions were Jewish, Hellenic, Christian, or Persian-Iranian– Jonas found the possibility of a Jewish origin incomprehensible.[55] His reason is conceptual: the defining gnostic de-valuation of the world [*Entweltlichung*] is a direct offense against Judaism and the Jewish God of the Bible. "The infallible testimony of [the Gnostic] revolutionary character", Jonas writes, is that "it positioned itself in open opposition" to Judaism and it "unleashed on the Jewish God of the world all its accumulated resentment" (228). Jonas, who claims to have felt "especially drawn to the 'biblical word'" from a young age and who found early interest in the thought of Leo Baeck and Hermann Cohen, admits that it may appear at first that the radically transcendent Gnostic god is consonant with the Jewish God of the Bible. "In itself", he notes, "it would have to be conceivable that in this God – transcendent and, since the prophets, detached from the natural religion, could more likely be a starting point for the Gnostic God of transcendence, rather than its anti-type" (Ibid). Yet in reality this is far from being the case. "Even though it was a transcendent [*überweltlicher*] God", he explains, "it was in no way a world-negating [*gegenweltlicher*] God". This position is reproduced in Jonas's famous tirade against the use of Heidegger for Christian theology in his 1963 lecture "Heidegger and Theology". In this later piece, "the profoundly pagan character" of the deification of the world and de-divinization of God that he identifies in Heidegger's later thought is contrasted to a Christianity true to itself and, in passing, to Judaism. Jonas asserts there: "theology should guard the radical transcendence of God, whose voice comes not out of Being but breaks into the kingdom of Being from without".[56] That the far-removed biblical God exercises a relation to the world constitutes a non-Gnostic ontology, whereby the world is valued and thus the existential abandonment and desire to escape are irrelevant. Primarily through the notion of 'creation', the biblical position accepts radical divine transcendence but undermines cosmic dualism. The affirmative relation of the biblical God to the world stands in marked contrast to the Gnostic conception of the divine. It is therefore little surprise that Gnosticism identifies the God of the Hebrew Bible with the evil deity of creation. This contrast is most sharply articulated by

[55] This scholarly debate was also deeply political. See Brenner (1999).
[56] In this respect, I am in disagreement with Lazier (2012, 37-48) and closer in certain aspects to Cahana (forthcoming).

Marcion of Sinope, “the revolutionary culmination of the gnostic development”, as Jonas puts it, who recognizes “the world-God (=God of creation=God of justice=God of Law) = God of the Jews as the truly and metaphysically pure condensed counter-principle to the otherworldly God” (1934, 230-1).

According to Jonas, the abandonment of the world by an unreachable God makes the Gnostic concept of god “a nihilist concept” (145). The negativity of the Gnostic god “was conceived as a springboard for absolutely denying all positivity of the world, the entire claim of the world’s existence, all worth and definitive value of existing being [*das Seiende*] as such” (248). This pessimistic position stands in strict opposition to the optimism of the biblical worldview. For by “overseeing the world through creation and providence”, the biblical God “bound[s] the entire person on worldly probation by his *Law*, or, what is the same, issued His moral interpretation in the givenness of creation under a positive norm” (228). By rejecting the notions of creation, providence, and divine law, Gnosticism is categorized as “decidedly a-moral” (ibid). Dualism is nihilism; a radically divorced God generates fallen human existence in a devalued world. In Jonas’s depiction, then, Gnosticism is a rebellion against the Jewish notion of a created, and therefore good, world governed by God. For the Gnostic tradition, “the mighty figure of the Old Testament God” was always perceived “as the only worthy symbol of the contrast: principle of the world, of temporality, and of positive morality” (231). It should be noticed that two out of these three features defining Judaism– worldliness and temporality – are consonant with Heidegger’s conceptions, which are utilized for portraying the Gnostic worldview but apparently also aptly describe its Jewish antithesis.

This, however, will soon change. In the 1930s Jonas does not yet openly deduce from what he found to be the striking effectivity of Heidegger’s philosophy to approach the Gnostic phenomenon that the two are affiliated. Only after Heidegger’s infamous *Rektoratsrede* did he recognize that his mentor’s philosophy and politics are intertwined and that they are of a Gnostic and nihilist character (Jonas, 1990). Heidegger’s politics emerge as a manifestation of the underlying anti-Jewish theological tradition informing it. Although Jonas recognizes this in the 1930s, only two decades later, in the 1952 article “Gnosticism and Modern Nihilism”, and then in further publications, does he finally articulate a philosophical critique of Heidegger - itself indebted to his Heideggerian reading of Gnosticism (Jonas,

1952). At the heart of his critique is the nihilistic light that is shed on modern secular existentialism, of which Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* is "the most profound and still most important manifesto" (Jonas, 1958, 335), by the Gnostic phenomenon. The modern secular existence appears as a radicalized version of ancient gnostic myth in which dualism collapses into monism: "what is the thrown without the thrower, and without a beyond whence it started?" (339). Drawing the conclusions from his early assessments, Jonas resolves that the reason Heidegger's terminology was so instructive for the examination of the phenomenon of Gnosticism is because it itself exhibits similar features and is animated by similar impulses (cf. Taubes, 1954). Jonas continues to hold the notion of creation as the key *philosophical* contribution of Judaism to western thought also in his later works, when he summarizes some key ideas of the "Old Testament tradition" that are at variance with the Gnostic and Heideggerian worldview: that the world is created by God, that God saw his creation as good, that man in created in God's image, and that man is expected to do the good (Jonas, 1974a, 21-44, 168-82).

Jonas's early engagement with Heidegger is conducted as part of his general grappling with the predominance of contemporary Marcionism, which he found above all in Barth's theology. His first published book (1930) set out to provide a Jewish counter-position to the anti-Jewish Gnostic approach he, following Barth's influential reading, found in Paul (Jonas, 1930; Lazier, 2012, 38-46). The exploration of Gnosticism through a Heideggerian lens is in many respects a continuation of this first work. That Jonas finds Heidegger's conceptuality conducive to describe the Gnostic *Entweltlichung*, the world-negating desire to overcome temporality and transcend immanent existence, is tightly linked to his association of Heidegger with Barth's early dualistic agenda. Jonas's later outspoken critique of Heidegger is based on his objection to the exaggerated radical transcendence of Barth's theology and its opposition to the Jewish standpoint. For Heidegger, to be sure, there is no transcending temporal existence and values are not grounded in an external source. Indeed, he considers such a view paradigmatically nihilistic. In Heidegger's view, *eignetliche Existenz* means embracing, rather than evading, Dasein's factical historicity. Heidegger perceives his own philosophical project as an overcoming of metaphysical dualisms – be they Platonic, Cartesian, or Christian. But as Jonas will make clear, the monism of Heidegger's secular existentialism is the other side of the coin of nihilistic

dualism (Vogel, 2008). Thus, while it would seem that the characterization of Judaism as upholding this-worldliness and temporal existence is equally suiting of Heidegger, Jonas would fiercely resist this equation. For him, Heidegger's radical immanence is made possible by the paradigm of *Deus abcsonditus*, which is, as Jonas later exclaims, "a profoundly un-Jewish conception" (Jonas, 1996, 140). But already the young Jonas is aware that Heidegger's existential meditation is affected by theological biases. In an unpublished text from the early 1920's, presumably written in the context of a seminar by Heidegger (on Augustine?), Jonas makes the point that Heidegger's decision to phenomenologically bracket out the question of God is not neutral but rather a theologically charged decision against God's role in the constitution of human existence. The operative outcome of this a-theistic methodology is that *eo ipso* the horizon of the interpretation of human existence is Godless.[57] Similarly, he notes that Heidegger's notion of *Geworfenheit*, which is exploited to describe the Gnostic soul's experience of being-thrown into the fallen world, "secularizes [*säkularisieren*] the reclaiming of a theological tradition that started out from that epoch" (Jonas, 1934, 106).

A related construal of the purported relations between Heidegger and Judaism is proposed by Shlomo Zemach, the Zionist agronomist and literary figure, in an article "Nazism, Jewish-hatred, and Schopenhauer" (1940).[58] Among other things, Zemach offers a telling analogy between Schopenhauer's philosophical pessimism and anti-Judaism, and Heidegger's philosophy and support of Nazism. As he explains, Schopenhauer divides world religions according to their 'optimism' or 'pessimism', himself clearly siding with the latter. Pessimistic and 'world denying' are New Testament Christianity, Brahmanism, and Buddhism, while optimistic and world affirming are paganism, pantheism and above all, Judaism. For Schopenhauer, the Jewish doctrine that has woefully left its mark on philosophy is "the doctrine that the world has its existence from a supremely eminent personal being and hence is also a delightful thing" (Schopenhauer, 1974, 192). Zemach singles out Schopenhauer's philosophical antisemitism not only because of its near-religious fanaticism, but also for it being "a philosophical,

[57] I would like to thank Elad Lapidot for bringing this unpublished text to my attention and providing me with a scanned version of it.
[58] Almost three decades later, Zemach translated Heidegger's essay *Origin of the Work of Art* to Hebrew. On the emergence and reception of this translation in post-holocaust Israel, see Herskowitz (2018, forthcoming).

moral, spiritual, anthropological, and legal basis for aggressive and murderous anti-Semitic madness, that is one with the raging anti-Semitism of the racist third Reich!" (Zemach, 242). Explicitly referring to Heidegger, who he considered the philosopher-prophet of Nazi anti-Semitism, Zemach brings together the two German philosophers.

> "If Martin Heidegger pokes reed in the sandbank of the 'naught' and of melancholy, if he is determined to renew a religiosity, as Dr. Hugo Bergmann has nicely put it, that the heavens are shut to it, a religiosity without a God – so then this doctrine too bears something from the depth of hell. And from the Schopenhauerean plane it draws the roar of the predatory beast, which is its voice" (247).

Heidegger's focus on nothingness, angst, and the overall bleak understanding of existence are likened to Schopenhauer's pessimism, and both contrasted to the optimism of Judaism. Their pessimistic worldview, in Zemach's explication, is rooted in a theological position regarding the forsakenness and negation of the world, which is conceptually tied to antisemitism and anti-Judaism. The problem with Heidegger, for Zemach, is the irrationality and dark passions that animate his philosophy, but also the theological view regarding the absence of a relational God to which Judaism bears witness.

Heidegger, Barth, and the Construction of Jewish Theology

We have thus far examined various cases in which Heidegger's thought is interpreted as a secularized Christian anthropology or as indebted to specific theological presuppositions within the orbit of contemporary Christian thought. Underlying this effort of re-theologizing Heidegger's position is an implicit refusal of his claim for neutrality. We now turn to an interpretation of Heidegger's work as standing *in opposition* to theology.

Hans Joachim Schoeps's first book, *Jüdischer Glaube in dieser Zeit. Prolegomena zur Grundlegung einer systematischen Theologie des Judentums* (1932), is an audacious attempt to establish a new systematic Jewish theology, grounded in Barth's doctrine and spotted with Heideggerian vocabulary. In this work, where the traversing of the traditional boundaries between Judaism and Christianity is overt, Schoeps elaborates on a Protestant understanding of revelation as "an experience of grace in which God opens up a possibility of salvation to the fallen ones", situated in a Jewish setting (ibid, 3,

73-5).[59] With recognizably Heideggerian locution, he declares that the task of contemporary Jewish theology is to identify the ontic character of contemporary existence and enhance it with a complementarily faithful understanding, preached as dogma. To do so, the Jewish theologian must recognize that a long process of apostasy and secularization has left the modern Jew existentially godless. Schoeps diagnoses his fellow German Jews (and Christians, who share a similar crisis of faith) as having completely appropriated the "western history of fallenness" characterized by "the practical and theoretical elimination of God-consciousness" (63-4, 84). Due to the "so secularized and terribly perverted consciousness", being a Jew has become meaningless and void of content. Against this Schoeps presents a theological formulation that urgently implores Jews to abandon their Godless existence and return to a Jewish life of obedience based on the ever-present event of the Word of God.

The "unbinding sketch" of the foundations of doctrines of faith which he presents as a model of a "systematic theology of Judaism" consists of the doctrines of the uniqueness of God, creation *ex nihilo* (which Schoeps stressed in particular), revelation of the law of salvation, and divine retribution. Discussing the last doctrine, which he characterizes as "Retribution as God's Rule over History and the Return of the Fallen", Schoeps maintains that "Heidegger's fundamental ontology can be the base for our task of the historical-theological exploration of contemporary understanding of existence", as it articulates the spiritual condition of the time. Portraying the existential makeup of a person alienated from the redeeming revealed Word of God, Schoeps perceives Heidegger as delineating the Dasein who is "always already determined as not-being-for-itself, as 'inauthentic', 'not-at-home', so that it must call itself out from the 'fallen being of das Man' to its authenticity" (86). Yet unlike earlier examined theological readings, for Schoeps the existential transition from inauthenticity to authenticity is not to be equated with the transition from a sinful existence to an existence in God. Heidegger's framework *en tout* is situated within the hermetic worldview of modern secularism. Dasein lacks the possibility of projecting towards a transcendence external to its world. Heidegger's immanent analysis of Dasein "had destroyed […] the greatness of the philosophical approach of the created nature of Dasein" (85). God

[59] Schoeps (1974, 138) would later reflect that his "entire existential structure has always been a Protestant and Lutheran one". Cf. Lease (1995, 191-231).

is completely absent from the portrayal of Dasein's existential conditions; Heidegger "always swings the human Dasein back to where it is ultimately fastened, in its self" (ibid). In this framework, the only condition of possibility for authenticity is Dasein's self-grounding through its being-towards-death, wherein not God but "death becomes the only actuality" (86).

From Schoeps's perspective, the godless existential notions offered in *Sein und Zeit* reflect the spiritual constitution of the modern fallen existence: "Heidegger's fundamental ontology has revealed 'thrownness', 'Angst' and 'Concern' as the mood of today's Dasein, who recognizes in the 'threatening nature of Being-in-the-world' of his existential condition and in the 'worldliness of the world' the final ontic ground" (ibid). It should be noticed that with this claim, Schoeps relativizes the scope of Heidegger's Dasein analysis from its claimed designation as the portrayal of human existence as such to merely its modern, secularized mode of existence. Indeed, Schoeps insists that "the basic mode of such a mood can also be viewed as nothing other than the being-thrown into the naked finitude of the world" (ibid). The immanent worldliness of Dasein cannot ground itself or provide salvific paths, as it reveals itself as "the nothingness of the nothing", directed towards death rather than toward "rest in God, the Lord" (ibid). Taken from the perspective of faith, Schoeps claims, "the suffering in torturous meaninglessness" of the godforsaken existence articulated by Heidegger is in fact a form of divine retaliation that the modern person cannot even see as such due to her imperviousness to revelation. More than anything, Heidegger's system expresses the prevalent "radical rigidification of immanence" plaguing the modern consciousness.

In Schoeps's view, what is dubious about Heidegger's philosophy is not its Christian undertones but rather its utterly secular character - regardless of its religious source. It follows that unlike others who couple Barth and Heidegger, Schoeps sees them as fundamentally disjoined. And since Schoeps by and large conflates Barthianism and Judaism, it also follows that Heidegger is negated to Judaism. In line with the radical perspective of dialectical theology, Schoeps sees Heidegger's philosophy to be situated outside the realm of theology altogether and in opposition to it. Following Barth, Schoeps rejects Heidegger's authentic/inauthentic distinction in favour of a distinction between graced and ungraced existence. And yet evidently, Heidegger is incorporated into Schoeps's theological programme, albeit

negatively: Dasein portrays the existential model of the sinner, the heathen, the fallen person, before revelation.

Heidegger's terminology provides Schoeps with a language for articulating his concern for the present and future of Jewish faith. In his peculiar Jewish-Barthianism, the overall Heideggerian, i.e., secular state of modern Judaism is manifested in the prevalent Jewish denominations in Germany. These are, according to Schoeps, either subjugated to the enlightenment's historicism and liberalism, to the spiritless legalism of rabbinical orthodoxy, or, worst of all, to the assimilationist impulses of Zionism. Albeit differently, all lack the openness and attentiveness to hear the Divine Word in its absolute concreteness, which alone permits the constitution of "the single possible, genuine, true relationship" between God and man (cf. Schoeps, 1970, 285). Schoeps's appeal to the Jewish people to divest themselves of their secular consciousness and return to a genuine relationship with God that constitutes a meaningful and authentic existence could be formulized as an appeal to move from Heidegger to Barth – and hence, to true Judaism. To this theological scheme, it should be noted, Schoeps adds a conservative reactionary political plan whereby the Jewish and Prussian nationalistic-spiritual missions are coalesced in the effort to restore the monarchy in Germany.[60]

This indirect incorporation of Heidegger for theological purposes would likely be strongly disapproved by Barth, for whom even the description of the fallen person is to be made through the language of faith, with no need to resort to philosophy. A few years later Schoeps seems to have align himself with this Barthian position. In his review of Delp's aforementioned *Tragische Existenz* (Schoeps, 1937a), he approves of Delp's view that "Heidegger's method is anything but presuppositionless" and "everything but 'ontically-neutral'" (142). Delp notes "very correctly" that Heidegger's philosophy "works like a

[60] These theologico-political convictions led Schoeps to establish an anti-liberal, fervently patriotic movement called 'Der deutsche Vortrupp. Gefolgschaft deutscher Juden', a vanguard that was to spearhead the actualization of his views of the necessary spiritual revolution and committed to the unified cause of German patriotism and Jewish religion. On this see Rheins (1981) and Mosse (1971, especially 102-9). Schoeps welcomed the rise of the National Socialist party as a promising opportunity for the restoration of a traditional and conservative German monarchy. This support spurred repeated attempts, beginning in 1933, for rapprochement with the new power. As there was little the Nazis detested more than racially inferior Jews who insisted upon their Germanness, this attempt failed miserably. Schoeps's extreme views and political activism made him target of the harshest of critiques from fellow Jews, before and especially after the war. He was accused, for example, of being a 'Heil Hitler Jew', a 'Jewish Nazi', or undergoing 'swastika assimilation'.

'theology' without a 'theos'", but this form of secularism is irredeemable: its immanent worldview cannot accommodate a genuine theological position. By positing death as the ultimate end of being human, it "has disabled the possibility of the presence of a higher authority from the very beginning". After lauding the study, Schoeps contends that its only weakness is that despite the excruciating critique of Heidegger levelled by Delp, the Jesuit author nevertheless mistakenly "wants to hear a 'good and useful message' from this philosophy for the people of our day" (144). For Schoeps, however, Heidegger's secular system bears absolutely no potential productivity for theology. "There is no accommodation between a truly present ontological philosophy which does not allow real transcending, and dogmatic theology" (145).

Schoeps's heavy dependence on Christian theology and his chauvinistic and reactionary theologico-political scheme drew fervent opposition from his Jewish contemporaries (Herskowitz, 2017b). Here we will only touch upon the instances in which these reactions shed light on Jewish understandings of Heidegger. For Ludwig Feuchtwanger, for example, the Barthian tone dominating Schoeps' work manifests an overall Christian impact hampering his attempt to produce an authentic Jewish theology. Repeating his aversion of phenomenology and non-rationalism, he bemoans: "Nowadays, inside and outside our university, Kant and Schleiermacher are pushed to the margins through the celebrated positive teachings of phenomenology from Husserl over to Scheler and Heidegger" (1932a, 167). Also Eduard Strauβ disapproved of what he called Schoeps's "theological assimilation", namely, the attempt to draw into the Jewish conceptual orbit inappropriate sources such as the "new 'theology of crisis'" expounded by Karl Barth's circle, and "perhaps Heidegger's philosophy as well" (1932, 313). Neither Feuchtwanger nor Strauβ elaborate upon their disapproval of Heidegger, yet it is clear that both find him an illegitimately 'foreign' source, inappropriate for Jewish purposes.

Perhaps the most intriguing protest against Schoeps's theology came from Alexander Altmann, who objects not only to the alleged suitability of dialectical theology for Jewish theology, but also to Schoeps's approach towards Heidegger's thought and its bearing on contemporary Judaism. Before becoming one of the preeminent scholars of Judaism of the previous century, the young Altmann ventured into constructive theology in an attempt to establish orthodox Judaism on firm philosophical

grounds, aiming to present it as a viable religious option for the modern Jew (Meyer, 2009, 107-65). As part of this endeavor, Altmann drew inspiration from dialectic theology while at the same time emphatically ruling against its application in a Jewish framework. Coming to terms with recent attempts to incorporate Barthian themes into Jewish theology by Schoeps and Max Wiener, Altmann targets in a 1933 essay the either/or conception of selfhood undergirding dialectical theology and Schoeps's attempt at Jewish Barthianism (Altmann, 1933/ 1991, 40-56). According to this 'Christian' conception, one is either a heathen or a Christian, and openness to and acceptance of the revealed Word of God constitutes the brink differentiating between both states. Schoeps, following Barth, asserts that by opening oneself to revelation, the apostate contemporary Jew can move from a heathen's existence to a pious existence. "For Schoeps", Altmann maintains, "the apostate Jew is identical with the existential type sketched in Heidegger's anthropology", which, he admits, is "wholly valid philosophically" (53). Heidegger provides Schoeps with a portrait of the sinful existential state of the Jew, a portrayal of "the person divested of all that is specifically Jewish, [who] is to be called upon to hear the Sinaitic revelation" (ibid). But this view presupposes a uniform existential structure between Christians and Jews, while the existence of the secular Jew, Altmann insists, is still marked by a specifically Jewish mark, and hence dissimilar to the general Western (Christian) person. The correct structure through which Jewish existential and religious transformation should be comprehended is not 'either/or', but that of return – *Teshuvah*, or 'always already'. Over against Schoeps's Christian *heutigen Daseinsverständnis*, Altmann polemically particularizes Schoeps' efforts and formulates "the Jewish-historical understanding of existence". He thus attempts to establish an alternative "specifically Jewish" theology, centring on the particularistic character of Jewish revelation and peoplehood [*Volkstum*], the two fundamental elements of a Jewish theology. In Altmann's particularistic account, *halakha*, Jewish law, is the content of Jewish revelation and the Jewish people are its subject - "a very specific law seeks its very special bearer and shaper" (50).

Tellingly, while targeting Schoeps's diagnosis of the spiritual situation of contemporary Jews, Altmann similarly resorts to Heidegger's analysis of Dasein in his outline of the "existential possibilities" of Jews seeking to return to "the organic attitude of authentic Jewish theological thought" (53). Yet

Altmann understands the place and role of the theological in Heidegger's scheme differently than Schoeps. He contends that Schoeps's theological reading of Heidegger is similar to Erich Przywara's, who understands "Heidegger's metaphysics of finitude as the defiant will to a 'closed, tragic-heroic innerworldliness'" (53-4) (see chapter 1). In this reading, Dasein is confined to the rigidification of immanence; the divine is found only outside the Heideggerian framework and the modes of existence it portrays. Altmann concurs that the world of the "Heideggerian man" is one of immanence and that "Heidegger himself does not discuss whether and how 'man's being-toward-God' is compatible with the existence of being-in-the-world" (53). However, resting on Heidegger's ontological/ontic distinction that Schoeps disregards, Altmann claims that the immanent Dasein can carry out a "leap […] into a theological sphere in which his ontological structures (anxiety, decline, conscience, guilt, temporality etc.) experience a theological translation". In a manner resembling Bultmann's reading, Altmann holds that Heidegger's ontology allows a translation or application of its existential conditions to the vocabulary of faith. There is no need to overcome Heidegger's framework in order to arrive at faith; it can, in fact, enrich the appreciation of faith. In this way, one can delineate an appropriate construal of ontic religious authenticity from Heidegger's ontological terminology. The possible relation between Heidegger's ontology and theology thus understood provides a "bridge from a radically secularized conscious attitude to a theological one. Or better, the 'leap' from exclusive worldliness to the turning toward God, born out of yearning, seems today entirely possible and meaningful precisely for modern man's existential condition" (54).

Altmann suggests applying Heidegger's ontological preconditions to the ontic case of Jewish particularity, wherein the "special feature of the ontic character of Jewish existence is present even if in his outer existence the Jew is not made to feel this specialness in some way" (ibid). In search for existential notions that specifically illuminate the ontic Jewish case and concur with his account of Jewish theology as a particular process of halakhic decision-making, Altmann finds that "most likely the existential moments, adduced by Heidegger, of 'heritage' [*Erbes*] and 'fate' [*Schicksals*] could prove to be decisive for an understanding of Jewish existence" (ibid). In *Sein und Zeit* §74 Heidegger explains that Dasein's resoluteness entails a shift in the self-understanding of its historicity and

temporality. Appropriating its thrownness, Dasein comes to see its historical facticity and past as 'heritage': "The resoluteness in which Dasein comes back to itself, discloses current factical possibilities of authentic existing, and discloses them in terms of the Heritage which that resoluteness, as thrown, takes over" (SZ 383/ BT 435). This consists of seeing its historical situation as well as its being-toward-death as 'fate': "Once one has grasped the finitude of one's existence, it snatches back from the endless multiplicity of possibilities which offer themselves as closest to one […] and brings Dasein into the simplicity of its fate" (SZ, 383/ BT 435). In Heidegger's employment, 'fate' does not denote predestination or subjugation to a definitive higher force, but rather an acceptance and a focusing of Dasein's possibilities in light of both its finitude and heritage (Guignon, 1992). Dasein's owning up to its finitude has an individualizing effect which detaches it from the conformity of *das Man*, but this does not imply solipsism or solitude. For Heidegger, heritage is always contextualized in a historical community [*Gemeinschaft*] of a specific people [*Volk*]. Authenticity therefore involves taking over inherited possibilities in the present within a shared communal setting. As such, it acts as a catalyst for a community "to become authentically bound together" (SZ 122/ BT 159). Importantly, the appropriation of heritage does not mean a restraining commitment of obedience to a forsaken past. Rather, putting to use a term bequeathed from Kierkegaard, it is accomplished as repetition [*Wiederholen*], a process of creative interpretation and realization of past possibilities in light of the present. Since resolute Dasein is always already part of a community, fate is integrated into the historical destiny (*Geschick*) of its community, and "its historizing is a co-historizing and is determinative for it as *destiny*" (SZ 384/ BT 436).

From Altmann's theological point of view, an ontic application of the ontological notions of §74 adequately articulate the peculiarities of Jewish existence, for "it is characteristic of the Jewish people that they are conscious of their heritage, as well as of their destiny, believing that they are always being addressed anew by God in the course of history […] it is the actuality of the 'Hear O Israel'" (54-5). *Volk*, in this understanding, is the Jewish peoplehood, 'heritage' is the Torah and the *halakha*, and 'destiny' is the Jewish mission of unfolding the word of God in history. Translating the ontological

conditions extended by Heidegger to apply to "the Jewish case", Altmann states that "these concepts display a very conscious turning toward the transcendent moment of divine revelation" (54).

It is noteworthy that Altmann picks up on the term *Volk* - not only because it appears only once in the entirety of *Sein und Zeit*, but especially in light of its ominous role in the nationalistic movement that took over Germany at the time and the role it soon played in Heidegger's philosophy in the 1930s. That Altmann centres on the *Volkish* vocabulary for his constructive theology reflects his alliance with the Zionist movement, which similarly drew on *Volkish* terminology to express its understanding of the Jewish situation. For Altmann, Schoeps overlooked the fact that this particular destiny of the Jews can find an expressive language in Heidegger because he denies both the particularistic nature of Jewish existence and the theological possibilities embedded in Heidegger.

Altmann's application of Heidegger's philosophy for the sake of a particularistic Jewish theology is founded upon the premise of its theological-neutrality, based on the distinction between the ontological and the ontic. This allows Altmann to break the perceived connection between Barth and Heidegger and endorse the latter while rejecting the former. In fact, Altmann asserts that Heidegger's vocabulary is more suitable for describing Jewish existence than it is for Christian purposes. This surprising claim is explained by Altmann's view that *Volkish* language is inadequate for the Christian faith, which is established on the theological construct of the Church. Judaism, on the other hand, is founded upon its *Volk*, and thus it can boast an actuality and "organic growth" lacking in Christianity: "The ever new way in which God addresses Israel is the Jewish destiny, which […] legitimizes the heritage of the Torah in its totality. Christianity is not able to possess this category of destiny as a theological category of, say, the ecclesiastical collectivity" (55). The usage of Heidegger's terminology of *Volk* and destiny therefore better suits Judaism than Christianity. Unlike the reading of the existential portrayal in *Sein und Zeit* as inflected by Christian presuppositions, Altmann accepts Heidegger's self-proclaimed neutrality, which allows him to identify in Heidegger a portrayal of the existential notions of the Jewish person, and thus to utilize *Sein und Zeit*'s vocabulary for the formulation of a Jewish theology. It should

be noticed, however, that the Heideggerian notions to which Altmann turns are not those that purportedly bear the residues of Christian tradition, but those which he shares as a religious Zionist.[61]

It is worthwhile to specify some potential points of attraction in Heidegger's framework from Altmann's perspective. First, Heidegger's understanding that there is no grouping of individuals but rather an individuation within the 'always already' established commonality of being-with is precisely the antithesis to Schoeps's 'Christian' either/or structure that Altmann finds amiss. Likewise, the underlying meaning of Jewish history in Altmann's approach as an evolving hermeneutic process of ontological import conforms to Heidegger's understanding of history as not merely a process of sequential events, but as *Geschichtlichkeit*, a temporal-hermeneutical happening that determines who we are. Heidegger's notion of *Volk* is particularly productive for Altmann's religious-Zionist account. Comparing it to other *Volkish* notions that were readily available to Altmann at the time, such as those of Buber and Rosenzweig, makes this clear. Buber spoke of a historical Jewish *Volk* throughout his entire lucrative intellectual career. For him, the inclination of the Jewish *Volk* is to eventually transcend its initial particularistic character and encompass all humanity. Furthermore, Buber does not perceive the past as a normative heritage that has claims on the present. The ek-static temporal structure that underlies Dasein's communal historicizing is also at odds with Buber's rendition of the I–Thou encounter as an ahistorical, timeless present, isolated from the past and the future. For Buber, Jewish law – which is situated in the sphere of It - is not an ongoing task demanding continuous commitment but rather a fossilized impediment on religiosity. Also Rosenzweig's conception of Jewish *Volk* would be ill-suited for Altmann's aims. Unlike Buber's universalized *Volk*, for Rosenzweig the Jewish *Volk* is particularistic. However, the spiritual task to be unfolded in history is ascribed in *The Star* to Christianity, while the Jewish *Volk* subsists in its meta-historical existence. Rosenzweig also famously differs from Buber in his positive attitude towards *halakha* as commandment [*Gebot*] (Rosenzweig, 1955). While Rosenzweig's perspective towards law is primarily focused on the individual, it is

[61] In a late paper, Altmann identifies in Heidegger's call for non-propositional language a possible avenue by which the God of religion and the god of philosophy can be reconciled. Altmann does this while acknowledging Heidegger's distinction between theology and philosophy and that "Heidegger preferred to be silent rather than name the mystery" that religion calls God. However, Altmann also points out that "there is now a growing recognition of Heidegger as an essentially religious thinker" (1987, 304-5). Cf. Wolfson (2014, 290n37).

nevertheless also communal, generational, and even trans-generational. In this respect he is close to Altmann. Yet Rosenzweig's approach towards Jewish law does not explicate on the process of development of *halakha*. The only development accounted for is the gradual existential progress towards accepting more *halakhot* as personally commanded. In comparison to these, Heidegger's notion of *Volk* is more operative for Altmann, for it enables him to speak ontically and constructively of a particularistic, historical, nationalist, and traditionally-focused Jewish community, whose identity is illuminated through a process of hermeneutics. It accounts for the person as both an individual and a member of a community whose authenticity is based on a resolute rejuvenation in the present of past normative traditions perceived as heritage, as the destiny of a trans-generational *Volk*. Implicitly, Heidegger's conceptuality also assists Altmann in resisting the accusation of formal legalism often directed toward Jewish orthodoxy by certain Christian stances and by liberal Judaism. For according to Altmann, *halakha* is not a form of dry, external legalism, but rather the Jewish resolution and fate, a manifestation of its authenticity.

Composed in 1933, the echoes of the recent Nazi *Machtergreifung* and the deteriorating reality of the Jews in Germany resonate clearly in Altmann's essay. Indeed, his theological appeal to Heidegger speaks to the contemporary German-Jewish situation. Not only does it constitute an attempt to categorically distinguish Judaism from Christianity in the wake of Schoep's extensive appropriation of Christian frameworks, but it also highlights the *Volkish* character of the Jews and distinguish them from the German *Volk*. Ironically, it is Heidegger who is culled by Altmann to substantiate his proposed national and religious Jewish revival in the wake of Hitler and to articulate that Jews do not share a spiritual vocation with Germany but rather constitute a distinct *Volk* with a heritage, fate and destiny of its own.

Altmann's appeal to Heidegger's philosophy as a legitimate source for theological deliberation begins already in an earlier essay, "Metaphysics and Religion" (Altmann, 1930/ 1991, 1-15). Here Altmann draws on Heidegger's "What is Metaphysics?" to re-establish the possibility of absoluteness in religion after its denial in metaphysics by Kant. Altmann explains that Heidegger succeeds in resurrecting metaphysics as a philosophically respectable field by designating its basic task to the inquiry into the

question of the Nothing as revealed in Dasein's experience of dread, which undergirds and leads to the question of being. According to Altmann, the wonder, celebrated by Heidegger, that there is something rather than Nothing at all, constitutes a consequential moment in post-Kantian philosophy for denoting an absolutization of being that is ultimately "directed towards immanence". By breaking the Kantian deadlock in philosophy, Altmann reasons, Heidegger opens the door also to a revival in theology. Equipped with Heidegger's phenomenological vocabulary of moods and the ontological positivity he attributes to Nothing, Altmann seeks "to lay bare the supratranscendental real givenness of the divine, appearing in a certain mode of experience" (ibid, 10). Leaping beyond immanence can be attained when the metaphysician's experience of wonder [*Staunen*], which is content with that which is and does not seek beyond the given, is replaced with the religious person's experience of reverence [*Ehrfurcht*] and its intentionality toward the beyond. This religious attitude "presupposes the metaphysical experience of Nothing being given" (11), yet the "reverence points not toward the immanence of the object but in the direction of the transcendent without wanting to grasp this transcendent in any way" (12). With this, Altmann consciously locates himself within the tradition of *docta ignorantia* of Plotinus, Arabic, and Christian Scholasticism. Yet "it is Jewish philosophy", he insists, and particularly Maimonides' doctrine of negative attributes, "that has held fast to this thought most emphatically and has elevated it to the cardinal tenet of its theological conviction" (13). In Altmann's analysis, the key to overcoming Kant and to re-crown the Maimonidean outlook resides in Heidegger. Consistent with his above reading of Heidegger, in this piece too Altmann recognizes the possibility of grounding theological claims in Heidegger's neutral ontology and applies its insights to the case of Jewish thought.

Conclusion

Like many of *Sein und Zeit*'s early readers, the Jewish intellectuals discussed in this chapter – save Altmann - contest the veneer of neutrality of Heidegger's ontology and highlight its theological presuppositions; specifically, its Christianly-inflected secularized anthropology and Dasein's godless world. With the backdrop of the desire for self-assertion in the face of Christianity, these thinkers conclude that insofar as Heidegger's philosophy is bound up in foreign theological assumptions, the fruitfulness of his programme for addressing the existential situation of the Jewish person is precluded.

As such, their assessments of *Sein und Zeit* participates in the effort of outlining and upholding the Jewish-Christian difference. And since part of the assessment pertains to its secularized categories, they implicitly touch on the question of secularization and its relations to Christianity and Judaism.

One important consequence of exposing a theological charge in Heidegger's position is the potential delimitation of its overall philosophical cogency. For if Heidegger's exposition of the ontological features of human existence is indebted to a specific Christian legacy, then its universality and neutrality is severely curtailed. It should be emphasized, however, that it is *not* implied here that being-Jewish is an ontologically distinct category – this will be Levinas's claim, which is discussed in chapter 7. The argument implied in the various responses discussed in this chapter is, rather, that Heidegger's philosophy provides an inadequate existential portrait of Dasein, one that is at odds with the ontic instantiation of the Jewish Dasein, because it relies on a very specific and biased tradition of what it means to be human. What emerges in the chapter - once again, save Altmann - is a structure of opposition between Judaism and Heidegger. In a time of the disenfranchisement and ostracization of Jews from German culture, Heidegger's support of Nazism adds a political dimension to this opposition. In the next chapter, dedicated to Martin Buber's long-standing philosophical dispute with Heidegger, this opposition will be played out through the prism of intersubjectivity and dialogue, which, as we shall see, bears theological and political layers as well.

Chapter 4: Dwelling Prophetically: Buber's Response to Heidegger

Introduction

Martin Buber's critique of Heidegger is centred on what he took to be Heidegger's 'monologism' and neglect of the dialogical principle in human existence and being. This critique is emblematic of a prevailing interpretation of Dasein as a solipsistic entity impervious to intersubjective relations. Appropriately, previous research has primarily focused on the relation between Buber's I-Thou and Heidegger's *mit-Sein* (Gordon, 2001). In this chapter, I wish to offer a wider critical examination of Buber's continuous engagement with Heidegger's early and later works, and argue that Buber frames his discord with Heidegger as a confrontation between a 'Greek' monological philosophy and a 'Jewish' dialogical alternative. Ultimately, I aim to show that Buber attempts to counter the Heideggerian call to 'dwell poetically', which he perceives to share the disposition of Gnosticism and Pauline Christianity, with a biblical alternative which I shall call 'dwelling prophetically'.

When Buber published his short work *Ich und Du* in 1923, he was already a well-known intellectual in both Jewish and non-Jewish circles, recognized especially for his writings on Hasidism and mysticism, his editorial work for the journal *Der Jude*, and his activities with Jewish adult education and Zionism. But the publication of this treatise, expressively articulating the dual relationality of human existence of I-It and I-Thou, secured his role as major organ of the 'new thinking' and *Existenzphilosophie*. Indeed, from early on he was read alongside Heidegger as participating in a common philosophical trajectory (Heinemann, 1929, 390). Any assessment of Buber's readings of Heidegger must therefore begin with acknowledging their shared philosophical horizon.[62] Amongst their parallels we can list the dethroning of reason as the primary characteristic of being human; the shared legacy of *Lebensphilosophie* and the departure point of human facticity; a rejection of the traditional modern subject and its replacement with the temporal and concrete self; an acknowledgment of the determining role of social relations in the world; an emphasis on existence, experience and immediacy; a belief in

[62] Comparisons between Buber and Heidegger abound. For example: Ward (1995, especially 126-46); Wood (1969, 71, 82, 101, 120); Bergmann (1974, 252-3); Theunissen (1965, 266-73); and Sigfried (2010).

the impediment that the technological modern world imposes on the ability to reach authenticity; and a fascination with language and Eastern thought.

Alongside these important points of affinity, to aptly come to terms with this intellectual engagement one must also bear in mind Buber's statements regarding Heidegger's project as a whole: "I shall only confess", he writes, "that for me a concept of being that means anything other than the inherent fact of all existing being, namely, that it exists, remains insurmountably empty [*unüberwindlich leer*]" (Buber, 1965, 73). Likewise, with respect to Heidegger's assertion that "Being is the nearest thing", Buber remarks: "if by the last sentence, however, something other is meant than that I myself am, and not indeed as the subject of a *cogito*, but as my total person, then the concept of being loses for me the character of genuine conceivability that obviously it eminently possesses for Heidegger" (ibid, 74). The importance of these statements cannot be exaggerated, for as we shall see, Buber's association of being with human existence, his fundamental dismissal of Heidegger's attempt to approach being untraditionally, and his discount of the ontological difference, anticipates what Buber calls in a different context a mismeeting [*Vergegnung*] (Goldstein, 1978; Rotenstreich, 1967, 127). Buber attributes to Heidegger the very kind of ontology he sought to problematize and the discussion as a whole is conducted on what Heidegger perceives as an ancillary philosophical plane. No wonder that it is reported that when Heidegger was asked about his position towards Buber's thought, he "did not really know what to answer", adding that "Buber probably did not address himself to his, Heidegger's, basic question of Being […] but that he was not sure" (Glatzer and Mendes-Flohr, 1991, 663).

Secularizing Kierkegaard: Buber on Heidegger's Gnostic Monologism

Later in his life, Buber intimates that reaching the bottom of his philosophical differences with Heidegger would necessitate a "religious dialogue", one which he is not keen on having (Fischer-Barnicol, 1977, 92). This striking statement can be clarified if we consider the theological ramifications of his programmatic insight that Heidegger portrays a "monological" world.[63] To do so, it is best to

[63] Buber repeatedly protests against the designation of his thought as theology. However, he seems to be resisting a very specific – systematic – understanding of theology. If by 'theology' one includes also reflections on the experience of divine presence, as is the case here, then Buber surely is to be considered as occupied with theological concerns.

begin with the 1938 lecture series "What is Man?", inaugurating Buber's recently assumed chair in the Hebrew University in Palestine, after fleeing from the Nazis that year (Buber, 1947). Somewhat belatedly, this constitutes the first extended encounter with Heidegger's philosophy.

Taking its cue from Kant's famous fourth question of anthropology - 'What is man?' – this lecture series surveys what Buber sees as the history of failed attempts at formulating a satisfying philosophical anthropology, stretching from ancient times to modernity. Significantly, the most elaborate discussion is dedicated to Heidegger. Buber's interpretation of the Dasein analytic is based on the intuition that Heidegger's focus on the ontological rather than the ontic is guilty of abstraction, and therefore the analysis of Dasein in *Sein und Zeit* does not deal with concrete human existence in its wholeness and actuality, but only with a limited province of it. Heidegger's Dasein is still bound up with the abstract tradition of idealism's notion of subjectivity and therefore profoundly falls short of his proclaimed aims. With this, Buber echoes the critique levelled against Heidegger at the time by others, such as Herbert Marcuse, Theodore Adorno, and Günter Anders. It also leads him to anticipate the critique usually associated with Maurice Merleau-Ponty and claim that the Dasein analytic "yields only the concept and outline of an almost ghostly spiritual being, that possesses, indeed, bodily contents of its basic sensations […] yet possesses even these in a way that has nothing to do with the body" (180-1). Buber, however, directs the critique of the idealistic remnants in Heidegger's anthropology towards his own interests. For him, the most important ramification of the abstract nature of Heidegger's analysis is its inability to account for the concrete truism that "the fundamental fact of human existence is man with man" (203). Heidegger, Buber judges, presents an account of absolute and solipsistic individualism. Buber is aware that the portrayal of Dasein as an isolated being seems to contradict the features of *Fürsorge*, *mit-Sein*, and Dasein's being-in-the-world, which ostensibly demonstrate the acknowledgement of the essential nature of relation. At the same time, however, he insists that Heidegger's system allows only utilitarian relations, not "essential" ones - a distinction strongly corresponding to the I-It and I-Thou relations. "In Heidegger's world there is […] no true Thou" (172), and thus both notions of authentic and inauthentic Dasein are situated in the I-It sphere. Real authenticity, i.e., the moment of mutual dialogue and openness, is beyond the reach of *Sein und Zeit*'s

system. Any dialogical relation in Heidegger's scheme should be characterized as "monologue disguised as dialogue" (Buber, 1947, 19). This critique is philosophical since it deals with what Buber sees as the deficiency of Dasein's existential constitution. But this philosophical critique also spills over into the ethical realm, insofar as intersubjective responsibility [*Verantwortung*] is grounded in the I-Thou meeting, which, as Buber informs, Heidegger cannot account for. As we shall now see, this critique is also theologically grounded.

To lay bare the difference between Heidegger's solipsism and his own view of relational existence, Buber contrasts Dasein self-relating internal 'call of consciousness' and the primal guilt it brings about, with the biblically-resonant external call of "'Where art thou?' [*Ayequa*]", to which the reply is "'Here am I' [*Hineni*]" (Buber, 1947, 166). By invocating the *Ayequa* call, Buber implies that in Heidegger's construal of Dasein, the exaggerated weight put on *Sein* leads to insufficient attendance to the actuality and specificity of *da*. For Buber, only when I encounter with all my being the presence of someone who is not myself, "only then am I 'really' there: I am there [*Ich bin da*] if I am *there* [*da*], and where this 'there' is, is always determined less by myself than by the presence of this being which changed its form and its appearance" (ibid). It should be noticed that Buber covertly appropriates Heidegger's terminology when he replaces Dasein's call with the biblical call. The point he makes by doing so is that one's 'there-ness' and fundamental existential guilt are inherently relational and constituted by others. More specifically, he insinuates that Heidegger's conception of Da-sein does not fulfil its purported standards, because only the relational I in its encounter with a Thou should be rightly termed Dasein. To be sure, in speaking of existential guilt - which is dissolved by genuine dialogue - in order to counter Heidegger's ontological notion of guilt - which is a fundamental and permanent constituent of one's being-in-the-world - Buber exhibits his typically ontic vantage point from which Heidegger's fundamental ontology is reproached. Also present here is Buber's perception of his dialogical response to Heidegger's solipsism as biblically anchored. This indicates an idiosyncratic anti-Bultmannian line of thinking, according to which the biblical depiction of human existence is antagonistic to the Heideggerian existentialist portrayal. But most importantly, what is illustrated here is Buber's belief

that his own biblically-attuned dialogical framework is better equipped to correctly account for the actual nature of human existence than Heidegger's philosophy.[64]

It is one thing to protest what may be perceived as a limited elaboration on genuine human interrelations in Heidegger's analytic. It is quite another thing to claim that it is fundamentally impervious to such interrelations. To best understand the conceptual framework that makes this argument possible, we must turn to Buber's reading of Kierkegaard. In Buber's rendition, Kierkegaard holds that being a Single One [*der Einzelne*] is the ultimate realization of the Christian individual's existence before God. "Kierkegaard's anthropology is […] a theological anthropology", Buber determines, for he reflects on "guilt, fear, despair, decision, the prospect of one's own death and the prospect of salvation" as "elements of an existence 'before God'" (162-3). Importantly, the goal of becoming a Single One is "the entry into a relation" (Buber, 1947, 50). But while Buber affirms Kierkegaard's acknowledgment of human relationality, he also claims that this self-transcending relationality is exclusivist, for the bond to the absolute must come at the expense of human relations. The Kierkegaardian Single One "stand[s] alone before God". According to Buber, for whom God resides in and through the meeting with the other person, distinguishing between the two relations, that is, in Kierkegaardian terminology, between the religious and the ethical, and granting one superiority over the other, as Kierkegaard does, is utterly mistaken. For him, Kierkegaard typifies an enduring Gnostic propensity animating Christianity from the days of Paul through Augustine and onwards, wherein the genuine relation to God ultimately entails "renunciation of every essential relation to anything else, to the world, to community, to the individual man" (1947, 178).[65]

This interpretation of Kierkegaard has been both highly influential and the target of much rebuke, and it stands as the background for the discussion of Heidegger in *What is Man?* For Heidegger, Buber maintains, has "taken over Kierkegaard's mode of thinking", but in so doing, he also "secularizes [*säkularisiert*]" Kierkegaard (Herskowitz, 2017c).[66] By this Buber means that "he severs the relation to

[64] This is also the view taken by Novak (1985).
[65] Gnosticism for Buber is not a particular historical phenomenon of the late antiquity but a universal spiritual attitude, and thus a constant threat. Cf. Buber (1960).
[66] Baring (2015a) does not mention Buber.

the absolute for which Kierkegaard's man becomes a Single One" (174). Approaching the matter through the prism of relationality, Buber is less concerned with the stripping of Christian categories of their content or the detachment from their conceptual habitat that takes place in Heidegger's secularized phenomenology. Rather, he is most concerned with the fact that the human's relation to God "is completely lacking in Heidegger" (178). In Heidegger's adaptation of Kierkegaard, the existential composure of the solitary individual standing in the face of God is not directed toward God but inwards, towards Dasein's absolutized self. And insofar as Kierkegaard advocates warding off human relations, then Dasein suffers a double privation: it is solipsistically closed upon itself and blockaded from relationality to either God or man.

Buber's conceptualization of Heidegger as a secularized Kierkegaard touches upon the question of the relation between I-Thou and I-Eternal Thou. Without entering into its thicket, it should only be affirmed that our discussion takes its cue from Buber's complementing assertions that his philosophical anthropology avoids "saying anything independent of man" (Rome, 1970, 76), but that similarly "when I seek to explain the fact of man, I can not leave out of consideration that he, man, lives over against God" (Buber, 1967a, 690). In other words, Buber's philosophical anthropology entails a theological anthropology. The encounter with the human Thou and the Eternal Thou are concomitant. As he says in *Ich und Du*: "By means of every particular Thou the primary word addresses the eternal Thou" (1958, 75). It follows, then, that the Kierkegaardian decoupling of the coexistence of the inter-human and human-God encounter is in fact detrimental to both. Thus, in accordance with Buber's assumptions, it can be suggested that Heidegger's position is the logical outcome – and the inversion - of Kierkegaard. "When the man who has become solitary can no longer say 'Thou' to the 'dead' known God", Buber writes, "everything depends on whether he can still say it to the living unknown God by saying 'thou' with all his being to another living and known man" (1947, 168). If this is not the case, as it is in Heidegger's analysis of Dasein, "as man he is lost". The world depicted in *Sein und Zeit*, Buber concludes, is one in which Dasein is a solipsistic monad who is incapable of self-transcendence and whose absolutized immanent world hinges on nothingness.

It is significant that throughout the analysis of Dasein's godlessness, Buber is careful not to attribute to Heidegger atheism, which he considers a lesser spiritual threat than Gnosticism (1965, 136). And while never outright dubbing him a Gnostic, it will become immediately clear that Heidegger is for Buber a modern proponent of the Gnostic legacy wherein the transcendent is so utterly extraneous that the immanent is absolutized (Brague, 2002; Feller, 2013; Erlewine, 2016, 78-104). Buber even finds in Heidegger's covert imperative to regain Dasein's self from its absorption in *das Man* "a gnostic concept by which the gnostics meant the concentration and salvation of the soul which is lost in the world" (1947, 174). For him, the Pauline-Gnostic attitude is a poignant manifestation of a monological worldview, which defines the modern age in general and is particularly evident in the resurgence of Marconitism in Germany in the early decades of the twentieth century (Mendes-Flohr, 1991, 221). On various personal and intellectual fronts, including his famous translation of the Bible with Rosenzweig, Buber confronts this spiritual and cultural force and its anti-Semitic associations. In Buber's mind, his discovery of the dialogical situation and experience, which he believes holds deep correspondence to the biblical worldview and which the prophets of Israel express more than any other faith or doctrine, can counter this impoverished and perilous spiritual condition (Buber, 1951, 162-4; 1948a, 16, 25-7, 183-94). It is within this context that his engagement with early Heidegger is situated.

Eclipsing Heidegger's gods

According to Buber, Heidegger's earlier and later thought is to be approached through a religious prism and read in light of Nietzsche's 'god is dead'. This statement, considered the epithet of the spiritual condition of modernity, means for Buber that "man has become incapable of apprehending a reality absolutely independent of himself and having a relation with it" (Buber, 1965, 14). The present condition is one of an 'eclipse of God' [*Likuy Ha'or Ha'elohi*, *Gottesfinsternis*], which denotes not the death or disappearance of God, but rather an obstacle impeding the divine-human relationship. More clearly than *Sein und Zeit*, Buber affirms that the later thinking of Heidegger - "who undoubtedly belongs to the historical rank of philosophers in the proper sense of the term" (70) - undertakes one of the most important attempts to "to fill the horizon that has been declared empty" (21). Drawing on his interpretation of Hölderlin, Buber explains that like him, Heidegger too pronounces this hour to be an

hour of night, and he too projects a spiritual reorientation "from which day may dawn again, and then 'the appearing of God and the gods may begin again'" (22). Heidegger also perceives his philosophical effort as itself preparing for "a turning-point in which the divine, or […] the holy, will appear in new and still unanticipated forms" (71). But what Buber finds most disquieting is the hardly accidental "coupling of an absolute singular with an iridescent plural" of God and the gods in Heidegger's Hölderlinean inspired writings. As he observes in an almost completely overlooked response to Shmuel Hugo Bergmann's critical review of *Eclipse*, with respect to "the extreme phenomenological promise of Heidegger, who prophesized a turn in thinking which will bring about the renewal of 'the appearance of the God and the gods'" - "the plural language here empties the singular language that preceded it of all content of true being" (Buber, 1954, 3). Buber's point is not merely to call out what he identifies as Heidegger's misreading of Hölderlin's 'gods' - although it is *also* that - but to confront what he takes to be the deeply faulty polytheistic impulse in Heidegger's thought. As we shall see, Hölderlin's poetry will often serve as the battle ground upon which Buber attacks Heidegger. More specifically, part of Buber's attempt to develop an alternative to Heidegger is effected by putting forth a counter-interpretation of Hölderlin as a modern-day biblical prophet and proponent of his dialogical philosophy, over against the role of the poet of being the German poet assumes in Heidegger's readings.[67] For Buber, at its best, the European humanistic tradition, currently under threat by philosophical and theological outlooks with which Heidegger is associated, is aligned with the humanistic message of the Hebrew Bible.

According to Buber, God is "wholly Other" and at the same time "the wholly Same, the wholly Present". We know nothing about God, but we can intensely experience his presence in a holy, noumenal dialogical encounter Buber calls revelation (1958, 104; Mendes-Flohr, 1991). Thought, as a systematizing and conceptualizing faculty, is unrelated to and indeed hampers the experiencing of divine presence. However, in Buber's interpretation Heidegger's gods are as far removed from God as possible. His line of reasoning is as follows: Heidegger claims that the reappearance of the gods will

[67] Cf. Adorno's 1963 lecture "Parataxis: On Hölderlin's Late Poetry", which likewise seeks to counteract Heidegger's readings of the German poet.

take place through the destiny of being. But insofar as being is clarified in its truth through historical Dasein, and "it is precisely in human thought about truth that being becomes illuminated" (Buber, 1965, 72), then humans have an active role in the reappearance of the gods. The advent of the gods is propelled by "the thinking through of the basic religious concepts, the cognitive clarification of the meaning of words such as God or the holy" (71-2). This leads Buber to interpret Heidegger as holding the view that humans could conjure [*beschworen*] the gods to appear as objects of thought. This conjuring effect, according to Buber, is characteristic of magic. In the immanent relation between humans and the gods of magic, neither side is independent: humans need the gods' "bundle of powers" and the gods are conjured to appear. This divine-human interaction, fraught with interest, coercion, and manipulation, is distorted. "God does not let himself be conjured, but He also will not compel", Buber determines. "He is of Himself, and He allows that which exists to be of itself. Both of these facts distinguish divine from demonic powers" (75). Religion, that is, human-divine encounter, is founded on the independence and relationality of both sides. Heidegger, according to Buber, conceives of the gods as objects of knowledge and therefore is only able to talk *about* the gods, but never *to* God. If, as Buber defines it, God is that which is always a Thou and never an It, then in contradistinction Heidegger's gods are never a Thou and only an It. Those which Heidegger designates as gods are knowable in that they are subsumed under the immanence of being, while throughout human history, "those who have been named by this word have been transcendent beings" (74). Thus, insofar as Heidegger's gods occupy a position in a system of thought at all, they represent the self-collapsing of radical transcendence into radical immanence. "He who confines God within the immanent", Buber announces, "means something other than Him" (28).

In Buber's analysis, Heidegger's conjurable polytheistic gods are conceptually linked to his monologism, that is, to his confinement within the immanent It-world that denudes the possibility of divinely-grounded dialogue, leading him to reject existing forms of religiosity animated by the dialogical principle. Buber in fact identifies some loose invocations of the dialogical principle in Heidegger's writings, when, for example, it is said that the gods address humans and extend demands. These, however, are "pregnant seeds" that are ultimately "destroyed" in Heidegger's ensuing works. In

his preparation for the advent of the 'Coming One', Buber remarks, Heidegger discards all past encounters with God and "summons all of the power of his thought and words in order to distinguish him, the "Coming One', from all that has been" (76). Ultimately, Heidegger demands a detachment from the past and remains fixed on a future advent, "a belief in the entirely new" (77).

This point is crucial for Buber: the impossibility of dialogue leads to a radical futurism which is a threat to 'religion' generally; "but in particular", Heidegger is "against the prophetic principle in the Judeo-Christian meaning".[68] To support this statement, Buber quotes (slightly inaccurately) a passage from Heidegger's elucidations of Hölderlin attacking the biblical prophets: "the 'prophets' of these religions do not begin by foretelling the word of the Holy. They announce immediately the God upon whom the certainty of salvation in a supernatural blessedness reckons". The context of this passage from *Elucidations* is an opposition drawn by Heidegger between the prophet and the poet, the latter of which is described as "the one who has been cast out – out into the *between* [*Zwischen*], between gods and men" (GA 4, 47 /Heidegger, 2000a, 64). Heidegger writes:

> "The poets are, if they stand in their essence, *prophetic*. They are not, however, 'prophets' according to the Judeo-Christian sense of the term. The 'prophets' of these religions do not only utter in advance the primordial word of the holy. At the same time they prophesy the God on whom they count for the security of their salvation in celestial blissfulness. Let one not disfigure Hölderlin's poetry by 'the religious element' [*das Religiöse*] of a 'religion' which expresses the Roman interpretation of the relation between men and gods. Let one not overburden the essence of this poetic calling by making the poet into a 'seer' in the sense of soothsayer. The holy which is foretold poetically merely opens the time for an appearing of the gods, and points into the location of the dwelling of historical man upon this earth. The being of this poet must not be thought in correspondence to those of 'prophets': rather, the 'prophetic' element of this poetry must be grasped in terms of the being of the poetic foretelling" (ibid, 136-7).

It is important that Heidegger's accusation against the biblical prophets upon which Buber focuses is analogous to his early kairological readings of Paul and his critique of Augustine's escape from insecurity in the quest for serenity and beatitude. Heidegger charges that the prophets offer strategies of comfort through the God of religion and refuse to risk the uncertainty of attentiveness to what he calls the word of the holy (Crowe, 2008, 105-15; Vedder, 2007, 215-36; Kovacs, 1990, 162-70;

[68] Translation amended.

Bernasconi, 1985, 29-47). The prophetic call on an accustomed God amounts to settling for the familiar and the safe, which implicitly frustrates the genuine preparation for the holy.

From Buber's perspective, Heidegger is not only mistaking the poets for the prophets in these passages, he is also misunderstanding the meaning of the prophetic. Buber charges:

> "I have never in our time encountered on a high philosophical plane such a far-reaching misunderstanding of the prophets of Israel. The prophets of Israel have never announced a God upon whom their hearer's striving for security reckoned. They have always aimed to shatter all security and to proclaim in the opened abyss of the final insecurity the unwished-for god who demands that His human creatures become real, they become human, and confounds all who imagine that they can take refuge in the certainty that the temple of God is in their midst. This is the God of the historical demand as the prophets of Israel held Him. The primal reality of these prophecies does not allow itself to be tossed into the attic of 'religions': it is as living and actual in this historical hour as ever" (1965, 73).

In other words, Heidegger attributes to the biblical prophets features of I-It modality such as stability, predictability, and control, while for Buber they exemplify the unmediated contact with the flux, indeterminacy, and instability of the dialogical life. The somewhat comical race between Heidegger and Buber in which, as Leo Strauss comments, "wins who offers the smallest security and the greatest terror" (Strauss, 1965, 11), captures how Buber understands the different application of their otherwise shared standards and assumptions. Heidegger's rejection of security indicates for Buber a denunciation of the past as such, while the same rejection leads Buber to a God who is by definition never familiar or a source of complacency. By associating Heidegger with those who take "refuge in the certainty that the temple of God is in their midst", Buber alludes to the prophet Jeremiah, who vilifies his fellow Jerusalemites for their unfounded dogmatic security in the indestructability of the temple: "Do not trust deceptive words and say 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord'" (Jeremiah 7:4). Buber's charge is targeted not only against what he sees as Heidegger's misinformed identification of I-It religiosity in biblical propheticism, which, according to Buber, actually stands in *contrast* to the prophetic message; it also targets Heidegger for promoting the very same depraved form of religiosity.

Evaluating Buber's Critique of Heidegger

Heidegger's 'gods' is one of the most enigmatic themes in his thinking, yet when we turn to evaluate Buber's analysis, some significant misinterpretations come to the fore. These can be explained either

by Buber's limited overview of Heidegger's work (which we now better enjoy) or by the conceptual molds through which he approaches Heidegger. In his deliberations, Heidegger is after the condition of possibility or the process of interaction that brings forth the presencing or the naming of the gods. In other words, he seeks to outline what takes place in the disclosure of being for the gods to be perceived as such. This unfolds in what Heidegger terms an *Entgegnung*, a countering and encountering of the gods and the mortals, where the gods open up a world for humans and orient them towards new orders of arrangements of entities, significances, and commitments. Thus, the rendition of the 'gods' is not an advocacy for polytheism: the gods are not God. They are, rather, fundamental to one's being-in-the-world, as they signal and make possible an attunement toward the elevated and the holy (Young, 2002, 94-9; Wrathall and Lambeth, 2011). In his *Contributions to Philosophy* Heidegger openly states that "the talk of 'gods' here does not indicate the decided assertion on the exactness of a plurality over against a singular but is rather meant as the allusion to the undecidability of the being of gods, whether one single god or of many gods" (GA 65, 437/ Heidegger, 1999b, 308). With this in mind, juxtaposing this undecidability with Buber's position fissures the credibility of his staunch insistence on metaphysical agnosticism. Buber sees himself as putting forth an account advocating against the limitedness of the I-It encounter and for an openness to the undecidability and multiplicity of the encounter with the world and God as Thou. Yet it becomes clear that this is a multiplicity framed from the very outset by a monotheistic affirmation. Buber's claim that "When Israel confesses (Deut. vi. 4) that JHVH is its Lord, JHVH the One, it does not mean that there is not more than *one* God – this does not need to be confessed at all" (1951, 130-1), or his rhetorical exhortation with regards to Heidegger, "who would dare […] to juxtapose God and the gods on the plane of the real encounter?" reveal a monotheistic presupposition regarding the necessary nature of the encounter with the absolute.

For Heidegger, the present age is one in which the gods have departed. Our age appears godless because our disposition toward being is that through which being is disclosed technologically, that is, as uniform, stable, interchangeable, and lacking inherent value. The projected return of the gods denotes a new openness and un-prescribed attunement to being and to the overabundance of possibilities of its showing-up. But most importantly for our context is that being presides over the gods (GA 4, 59/

Heidegger, 2000a, 82; 1998, 258, 294). Heidegger is decidedly not discussing the God of faith, who, as he repeatedly insists, has nothing to do with being. Moreover, Heidegger, like Buber, is deeply critical of the centrality of human subjectivity in modern theology, and they both hold an iconoclastic, apothetic, anti-metaphysical notion of God. Heidegger's rebuke of 'religion' must be understood in the context of his rejection of that category as inappropriately grasping the human-gods interaction. 'Religion' was for Heidegger a characteristic feature of the Roman culture he despised, in which everything, including the relation to the gods, was approached in terms of utility or by an imposition of a preconceived and systematic set of assumptions and conceptions. It was, in Heideggerian terminology, a culture marked by an impoverished notion of *technē*. In contrast, "The Greeks had no 'religion', because they were and still are those who are under the gaze of the gods" (GA 50, 108; GA 75, 241). Buber would agree with Heidegger's contempt for this form of religiosity, but not with associating it with the Hebrew prophets.

This also means that the affiliation of Heidegger's gods with magic is wildly off the mark. As will be indicated soon, the conceptual presuppositions of magic as Buber depicts it, including the unity of being and language, wherein both are completely accessible, unconcealed, and present to hand, and the notion that humans have hold on being in such a way, is intelligible within Buber's scheme but is at complete odds with Heidegger's. It should also be noted that Heidegger's pragmatistic taste deems it so that being is not illuminated only or even primarily in human thought. And if anything, humans anticipate and prepare for the arrival of the gods, not cull or control them.[69] The gods address man, demand response, lay claim, extract radiance, and elicit worship. Seemingly, an earlier statement by Buber equally reflects Heidegger's view on the matter: "We know that it will come; we do not know how it will come. We can only be prepared. To be prepared, however, does not mean to wait immovably […] to be prepared is to prepare" (1967b, 55).

For Heidegger, in contrast to Buber's assertion, this preparation does not necessitate a rejection of either the past or of everything familiar. Indeed, Heidegger is strongly against a simplistic invalidation of the

[69] Jean Wahl's claim (1967, 499) that "it seems at least that Buber has exaggerated Heidegger's involvement in what Buber calls 'modern magic'" is an acute understatement.

past. As he explains in *Sein und Zeit*, authentic historicizing involves a retrieval and repetition of Dasein's heritage in light of a projected future. "There is need for a rethinking which is to be carried out with the help of the European tradition and of a new appropriation of that tradition", Heidegger says in his famous 1966 *Der Spiegel* interview. "Everything essential and everything great originated from the fact that man […] was rooted in a tradition" (Wolin, 1993, 113). In "The Principle of Identity" he makes this clear:

> "Whatever and however we attempt to think, we are thinking within the sphere of tradition. Tradition prevails when it frees us from thinking back to a thinking forward, which is no longer planning. Only when we turn thoughtfully toward what has already been thought, will we be turned to use for what must still be thought" (GA 11, 34/ Heidegger, 1969b, 41).

Liquidating the past institutes an inauthentic disowning of Dasein's ec-static temporal structure, a position which better reflects Buber's own perception of the temporally autonomous present moment of I-Thou. Buber misinterprets Heidegger in disconnecting the "unaccustomed", the "unlike", and the "different" in Heidegger's analysis of Hölderlin's *Andenken* from the re-membering, re-thinking and retrieval mentioned in that very analysis. The advent of new gods, according to Heidegger, will not prompt the radical disassociation with the familiar, but rather the unconcealment of new possibilities and forms of ordering from within a familiarity that was thought to have been exhausted.

Having said this, there is, no doubt, an anti-monotheistic ire in Heidegger's thinking. Heidegger wants to steer away from what he considers the West's technological, metaphysical, and coercive comportment toward being, of which the Judeo-Christian monotheistic tradition has a seminal part in implementing. In its place, he seeks to prepare for the unconcealment of a new horizon of poetic openness to the multiplicity of being as a "new beginning" reappropriating the Greek pre-Platonic world. When Heidegger attacks the monotheistic tradition, his target is primarily Christianity. This appears to be the case also with regards to the recently published *Black Notebooks*, where he speaks of world-Judaism [*Weltjudentum*], which for him stands above all for the cardinal sins of modernity, namely, the machination [*Machenschaft*] of being, the technological and control-seeking way in which being shows up. This is manifested in the characteristically Jewish "empty rationality and calculative efficiency" dominating the era (GA 96, 46; Farin and Malpas, 2016, Trawny, 2014; Cesare, 2015; Heinz and Kellerer, 2016; Homolka and Heidegger, 2016; Gander and Striet, 2017, Lapidot and Brumlik,

2017). Of course, Buber's claim that Heidegger targets the prophetic principle "in particular" better reflects Buber's concerns than those of Heidegger. In *Elucidations*, to which Buber is reacting, Heidegger demeans the prophets, but it is most often the notion of creation that Heidegger subjects to special invective for indicating that the question of being is answered before it is even raised. For him, the monotheistic notion of creator God and master of being is the grounding principle of a uniform and stable understanding of being as that which has been produced and which receives its meaning from a single capstone ultimate entity. But Buber's insult is not unjustified, as Heidegger's critique of the prophets is bound up with the critique of the creator God. Both are said to be rooted in the technological notion of control over being and the will to power. While Heidegger lists, significantly, "the godly [*Göttlichen*] in Greek culture, in prophetic Judaism [*Prophetisch-Jüdischen*], in the preaching of Jesus" as examples of divinities that are the "beckoning messengers" that bear out the presence of the gods, (GA 7, 185 /Heidegger, 1975, 182), he also highlights, contemporaneously with his *Elucidations* and in one of the few references to the Hebrew Bible, the Jewish origin of biblical prophecy: "'Prophecy'", he notes, "is a technique of defence against what is destinal in history. It is an instrument of the will to power. That the great prophets are Jews is a fact whose secret has still not been considered." And he continues: "'prophecy' is forward-looking history and therefore the technological perfection of the Wesen of history" (GA 97, 159).

Propheticism and Apocalypticism

The full scope of Buber's critique of Heidegger comes to light when some of its animating conceptual sub-currents are exposed. It is noteworthy, for instance, that despite his insistence on their immanence and knowability, Buber refuses to term Heidegger's gods 'mythical'. For Buber, myth denotes a positive spiritual force, one which is "the nurturing source of all genuine religiosity", and "fundamental to Jewish religiosity, and central to Jewish monotheism" (1967b, 105).[70] Buber holds an apophatic theological position and, at the same time, attributes positive religious quality to concrete mythical representations of the divine, insofar as they bear witness to the intimate encounter with the living and unknown God and recognize that every image of the utterly unrepresentational God conceals just as

[70] Buber's conception of myth developed, but he held on to this fundamental belief deep into the 1950s.

much as it reveals. According to Buber, "[t]he religious reality of the meeting with the Meeter, who shines through all forms and is Himself formless" is a fundamental truism of the prophetic worldview (1965, 45). But this is not the case with Heidegger. The possibility that Heidegger's invocation of the gods marks a positive spiritual development of mythic revival is invalidated because it does not stem from an encounter but is rather part of the apparatus of thought. In Buber's words, "without the truth of the encounter, all images are illusions and self-deception" (23).

Heidegger, then, is not associated with myth, but rather with magic. In an earlier essay Buber distinguishes between gnosis and magic, on the one hand, and myth, on the other. In his view, gnosis and magic constitute a spiritual threat to the religious-dialogical possibility, and their overcoming is the determining moment that turned "the tribes of Jacob" into "Israel" (1948a, 21-2). Magic is characterized as the spiritual category of what Buber calls the evocable god. In his biblical interpretation, this is the god of the Egyptians who is ousted at the event of the burning bush when the non-evocable God of Israel responds to the question regarding his name "*Ehyeh asher ehyeh*". Buber interprets: "If the first part of the statement says: 'I do not need to be conjured for I am always with you'", then "the second adds: 'but it is impossible to conjure me'". Summarizing the spiritual revolution of Israel, Buber proclaims that in Egypt "religion was in practice little more than regulated magic. In the revelation at the Burning Bush religion is demagicized" (1968, 59-60). Buber employs this conceptual opposition between Israelite religion and spirituality of magic throughout his entire intellectual career, including in *I and Thou*, in his differentiation between proper-dialogical and perverse-theurgic approaches to God by Hasidic masters in his literary work *Gog U'magog* (1943), and in his quarrel with Gershom Scholem over Kabbalah. Since it is evident that he draws on this sustained conceptual reservoir to articulate his critique of Heidegger as well, it can be judged that the unfounded attribution of magic to Heidegger has less to do with Heidegger's actual position than with the ideatial framework through which Buber theorizes.

That Buber approaches Heidegger through his predetermined structures is further apparent in a more charged and steadfast binary driving Buber's response to Heidegger, that of propheticism and apocalypticism (Buber, 1957; 1948a, 36-7). The radical futurism attributed to Heidegger and the

consequent eschewal of the familiar is, for Buber, a fundamental feature of the apocalyptic consciousness. Apocalypticism and Gnosticism are conceptually interlinked: a radical rift lies between God and the unredeemable world, and therefore no dialogue or relation is possible between the two. Both views also hold that the present world is so fallen that redemption is projected into the future and is *from*, not *of* the world. For Buber, these allied outlooks encompass a cluster of derived ideas, including the lack of historical alternatives to the overcoming of the present world and the advent of a future; the depreciation of human decision; a subsequent sense of existential stability and predictability; and an emphasis on individual rather than collective salvation. It is therefore fitting that Buber classifies apocalypticism and Gnosticism as a Hellenistic rather than Jewish phenomenon (Buber, 1951, 9-12ff; 1948b, 95-116, 123). Controversially, he also considers Pauline Christianity, with its conception of faith as *pistis*, a believing *that* [*Glauben dass*], to bear Gnosticist and apocalyptic tendencies. *Pistis* as agreement to proposition implies not mutuality but concession and abstraction, and thus monologue and lack of immediacy with God. This account of faith, Buber insists, led to a dogmatic Christian history of salvation coloured by Gnosticism. Modern secularization, that is, the present-day eclipse of god, is formulized as the re-emergence of Gnostic impulses and hence as standing in continuation with significant strands in Christian tradition.

Buber contrasts this general outlook with the anti-Gnostic and anti-apocalyptic prophetic worldview, driven by the following conviction: "that God dwells in His creation and that God will redeem it are also one and the same thing" (1948b, 105).[71] Redemption on this account consists not in the overcoming of the world but in its hallowing. This is affected dialogically; everyday historical life and concrete human existence are the platforms of this relation. "The prophetic faith", Buber writes, "involves the faith in the *factual* character of human existence, as existence that factually meets transcendence" (1957, 198). Since the prophet speaks in an "actual historical-biographical situation", the focus is ultimately not on the future but on the present hour, the enacting moment of decision whether or not to turn to God [*Teshuvah*]. The core teaching of the prophetic experience of history, Buber emphasizes, is that it is

[71] The major milestones in Buber's counter-history are the prophets, the Essenes and Jesus, Hasidism and his own dialogical thought.

open to alternatives. It follows that the prophetic message possesses an inherent element of distress, uncertainty, and instability. In contrast to *pistis*, what informs the prophetic worldview is *emunah*, that is, faith, truthfulness, trust *in* [*Vertrauen*], which for Buber amounts to an openness to an abiding dialogical intimacy and immediacy with the divine (Buber, 1951). What emerges, then, is that in both direct and indirect ways, Buber affiliates Heidegger with magic, false prophecy, and the Marcionite, Gnostic, and Pauline tradition - categories that are united primarily in their opposition to his biblical-prophetic-dialogical programme.

Buber's Theopolitics and Heidegger's Nazism

Buber's over-simplified schematization of propheticism versus apocalypticism is not without difficulties, as is the covert conflation of his debate with Heidegger on this schematization. But the theologico-political ramifications he associates to it are important. Buber's conviction that apocalypticism is the political outcome of Gnosticism illuminates his analysis of the theological underpinning of Heidegger's alliance with Nazism. Principally, Buber's philosophical attack on Heidegger's politics is as an extension of his critique of Hegel, in particular the Hegelian notions of totality, the immanent identity of being and Idea (God), and the ultimacy of the state. As Buber explains, Heidegger is nourished by the Hegelian absolutization of history, itself a modern heir of the Pauline dualistic conception of history that collapses into immanence (Taubes, 1967). "The existentialism of Heidegger is also rooted in Hegel's thought", he writes, "but in a deeper, indeed the deepest possible, level. For Hegel world history is the absolute process in which the spirit attains to consciousness of itself; so for Heidegger historical existence is the illumination of being itself" (1957, 215). In a rare appearance of the notion of 'divine judgment' in Buber's *oeuvre*, he claims that Heidegger's immanentist framework leaves no room "for a suprahistorical reality that sees history and judges it". This, for Buber, explains Heidegger's apocalyptic embrace of National Socialism. "If historical time and history are absolutized", he states, "it can easily occur that in the midst of present historical events the time-bound thinker ascribes to the state's current drive to power the character of an absolute and in this sense the determination of the future" (ibid). The tacit analogy made here is that between Hegel's enthusiasm for Napoleon and Heidegger's embrace of Adolf Hitler (cf. Kraft, 1966, 13). Heidegger,

Buber proclaims, "has bound his thought to his hour as no other philosopher has done" by affirming his own hour, marked by Hitler's rise to power, as an elevated, absolutized 'historical' moment in which "the essence of truth is originally decided" (1965, 77). Lacking the contact with the "One who does not dwell in time but only appears in it", Heidegger's immanent account of history can only absolutize moments within itself. And as it lacks a suprahistorical purview and standard, Heidegger's immanent account is susceptible to absolutizing problematic historical moments. "Heidegger", Buber concludes, "creates a concept of a rebirth of God out of the thought of truth which falls into the enticing nets of historical time" (78). It should be noted that the analysis of the theological link between Heidegger and Nazism is the mirror image of Buber's critique of Carl Schmitt's political theology (Brody, 2015; Lebovic, 2008). Buber disapproves of Schmitt's instrumentalization of theological conceptions in the service of the authoritarian state, while his claim against Heidegger is that his *denial* of divine power is harnessed to the services of the authoritarian state.

Buber himself, of course, absolutizes the biblical-prophetic moment as an elevated and ever valid model of human existence. However, he holds history to be under the judgment of God and therefore it is not absolute in the same sense as Heidegger's conception of history is said to be. But there is more to the dispute between Buber and Heidegger than the difference between purportedly religious and secular conceptions of history. For while Buber believes that the absolutized model of prophetic-dialogical existence should and could be revived here and now, Heidegger knew that the simplistic "flight to the Greek gods" was "self-deception", and that resurrecting the glory of Greece was a "childish" [*kindisch*] wish (GA 53, 66/ Heidegger, 1996, 53). In his view, the poets – and for Heidegger Hölderlin is *the* poet (Bernasconi, 2013) - are able to identify and create space for unexposed potentialities within the past. Thus the crucial difference between Buber's static and Heidegger's ec-static conceptions of time surfaces here as well.

Against this overall theologico-political view, Buber sets forth a theopolitics founded on what he takes as the prophetic call to resist the claim for human sovereignty and crown God as absolute king. The embodiment of this anarco-theopolitics is the narrative in which Gideon declines kingship in Judges 8. This refusal is taken as a representative statement of Israel's recognition that no human can truly rule

because God is already the king. Resisting kingship and curtailing the power of human leadership in the name of the absolute sovereignty of God is the main political teaching of the biblical prophets as well. Significantly, Buber develops this political vision in Germany and Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s, in the wake of and as a response to the rise of Nazism and totalitarianism. Confirmation that Buber perceives Heidegger's theology of history to be anti-prophetic is found in an insinuation to the opportunism embedded in Heidegger's political lapse while discussing his absolutized account of history: "[A]fter all", Buber remarks, "the goblin called success, convulsively grinning, may occupy for a while the divine seat of authority" (Buber, 1957, 215). The motif of 'historical success' appears in Buber's works as part of his anti-Hegelian polemic against the criterion of historical success as the marker for meaning. In contrast to world history, wherein "what determines the importance of events is achievement and success", Buber claims the biblical conception of history "attaches no particular importance to achievement or success" (Buber, 1968, 142). According to this account, "the real history of the world is covert, or hidden history". The desire for historical success characterizes false prophets, while "this glorification of failure culminates in the long line of prophets whose existence is failure through and through" (ibid, 143). It is thus apparent that Buber's indictment of Heidegger's political affiliation is rooted in the latter's godless, monological, absolutized account of history, and it is mapped on the differing theo-political forms of the propheticism and apocalypticism.

It is important to make clear that unlike what is suggested in Buber's explication, it is now known that Heidegger develops his thoughts about the coming of the gods in the wake of what he saw to be the *failure* of the Nazi party and his subsequent political estrangement. Although Heidegger remained a member of the Nazi party until 1945, his writings testify to a self-distancing from his initial identification of Hitler as a Germanic saviour approximately a decade before. In this respect, Buber is reading him backwards, that is, he explains Heidegger's political actions through the philosophical developments that emerge from Heidegger's retreat from politics. Of course, this retreat was not caused by moral confoundment from the Nazi horrors, but by Heidegger's disappointment from what he saw as the party's betrayal of its destiny to instigate the Greco-German 'new beginning' (Bambach, 2003). And yet Heidegger also continues to speak of the truth, destiny, homecoming, language, and historical

being of the German *Volk* after his distancing from the Nazi party, a fact that may explain Buber's historico-political concretization of the elusive *Kommende* as referring to Hitler. A noteworthy point in this context is that the publication of Heidegger's *Black Notebooks* divulges that after his disillusionment with National Socialism, he too interprets the essence of the party along politico-theological lines. The political manifestation of the technological and metaphysical perception of being, which he ties to biblical monotheism, culminates in the violent domination of National Socialism. "The modern systems of total dictatorship stem from Jewish-Christian monotheism", Heidegger maintains. "In the timeframe of the Christian West, that is, of metaphysics", he notoriously urges, "Judaism is the principle of destruction" (GA 97, 20).

Thus, both thinkers come to see the Nazi regime as an apocalyptical power, but Heidegger interprets it as the outcome of conceptual frameworks associated with Judaism, while for Buber it is the political manifestation of deep-seated anti-Jewish forces. Once again, it can be witnessed how the two men's shared suppositions run in parallel and are applied differently. Both thinkers seek to re-establish a sense of sacredness, transcendence, and belonging in a world impoverished by technological culture, metaphysical conceptuality, and totalitarian politics. Both find comparable features of the present to be problematic, and both also attribute eschatological quality to the recovering of an obfuscated attunement to the world. But the traditions of thought they identify with the disease and the proposed remedy are crisscrossed, and in both cases, their analyses are formulized by admittedly monolithic and oversimplified construction of Jewish (or Judeo-Christian) and Greek (or Greako-Germanic) traditions. For Buber, Heidegger's programme perpetuates a monological way of life which denudes the possibility of experiencing divine presence and ultimately leads to totalitarianism. For Heidegger, the monotheistic-metaphysical framework through which Buber reflects participates in a violent technological tradition that limits the possibilities of being's showing up and correlates to the apocalyptic destruction of the totalitarian state.

Buber's Ontology of the Between as a Response to Heidegger

Alongside his critiques, in a number of essays composed throughout the 1950s the aging Buber set himself the task of formulating what he calls an ontology of 'the between' which, in part, is to serve as

an alternative to Heidegger's ontology. The philosophical rather than the religious tenor is the more dominant here, but the resonances of the latter remain present throughout. Buber resented at the time Maurice Friedman's suggestion of affinities between Buber's and Heidegger's thought - "to which I stand in opposition more than ever", as he retorted. But as we shall now see, his essays interact with Heideggerian themes in a manner betraying his negotiation between the attraction and repulsion of Heidegger's fertilizing philosophy (Buber, 1975, 291). Indeed, recording a conversation he had with Buber at the time, Werner Kraft reports: "Buber then said: 'Heidegger's central idea is a sham [*Fälschung*]', but I have the impression that he - like Löwith – cannot free himself from Heidegger" (Kraft, 1966, 22).

Validation for Kraft's assessment can be discerned in a revealing engagement with Heidegger in the essay "Distance and Relation" (1951), where Buber aims to reach "the principle of human life" by considering "the category of being [*Seinskategorie*] characterized by the name of man" (1988, 49). This unfolds in an attempt to work out an ontology of 'the between' by positing the twofold movement of distance and relation as a somewhat simplified alternative to the disclosing character of Dasein. For example, Buber writes that "Only when a being [*Seienden*] is independently over against a being [*Seiende*], an independent opposite [*selbständiges Gegenüber*], does a world exist [*ist Welt*]" (51); or "Man turns to the withdrawn [*abgerückten*] being [*Seiende*] and enters into a relation with it" (52).[72] This can be seen as a Buberian take on the relationship between truth and freedom in Heidegger, whereby beings can manifest themselves only once Dasein frees them in the clearing to themselves, that is, lets them be. Similarly, Buber notes the unique human ability to grasp the world as a totality: "Man is like this because he is the creature [*Wesen*] through whose being its beingness [*Sein das Seiende*] becomes detached from him, and recognized for itself" (51).[73] This dynamic of self-distancing and recognition creates the world: "when and to the extent to which a world exists, there exists the man who conditions it" (52).[74] The human for Buber is not a clearing but the endower of distance and

[72] Ronald Gregor Smith obscures the intended rejoinder to Heidegger by translating *Seiende* as 'structure of being' or 'living being' rather than the more immediate rendition of 'being'. The quotations below have been amended accordingly.
[73] Translation amended.
[74] Translation amended.

relation, so that one does not only encounter the world, but rather *is* the encounter through which the world is set up. Unlike Heidegger, Buber's ontology is typically concerned with beings and is clearly anthropocentric: the setting of things into independence is accomplished by humans and for the sake of human activity. This can be seen as Buber's concretized, ontic corrective to what he took to be Heidegger's overly abstract ontology. As he later tells Werner Kraft: "Particularly important minds today built a world above which does not accord with reality, and that is a dangerous game; one sees it in Heidegger" (Kraft, 1966, 36).

Another tacit encounter with Heidegger can be found in a curious resort to Heraclitus amidst a discussion of Taoist, Hindu, and modern mystical approaches in the 1958 essay "What is Common to All".[75] In 1954 Heidegger published his analysis of Heraclitus' fragment 50, which he renders: "Habt ihr nicht mich, sondern den Sinn vernommen, so ist es weise, im gleichen Sinn zu sagen: *Eins* ist Alles" - "When you have listened not to me but to the Meaning, it is wise within the same Meaning to say: *One* is All" (GA 7, 213/ Heidegger, 1984, 59). The main insight Heidegger draws from this is the notion of logos as 'gathering-laying together', that which "lets things lie together before us" in a relational coherent unity, so that they are disclosed as what they are - "the *presencing* of that which lies before us into unconcealment" (ibid, 62, 63; Cf. SZ §7. B). This insight is built upon Heidegger's notion of truth as *a-letheia*, which is equated to logos: "Logos is in itself both unconcealment and concealment. Logos is the A-letheia" (63). Buber, who confesses that "ich halte Heideggers Heraklit-Interpretation für absolut falsch" (1975, 291), appeals to the pre-Socratic in support of his own dialogical ontology and to counter Heidegger's reading. It can be said that Gadamer's claim that what Heidegger found in ancient Greek texts "was certainly himself" applies to Buber as well. Heraclitus' fragment 88, "the waking have a single cosmos in common", and fragment 2, "one must follow that which is common", are taken by Buber to pronounce the uniting common sphere opened up by human sociability and relationality: "'the common' is the sustaining category for Heracleitus. It enables him […] to grasp and confirm as a spiritual reality [human] being-with-another [*Miteinandersein*], the full mutuality of

[75] This is recognized by Maurice Friedmann in his introductory essay to Buber (1988).

human being" (1988, 80).[76] Through Heraclitus's fragments, Buber attempts to explicate ontologically the expanded I-Thou relation of the togetherness of We – a notion which in *What is Man?* was said to be unanchorable in Heidegger's individualistic framework (1947, 176). Repeating this judgment, Buber explicitly contrasts his teaching of We with "what Kierkegaard designates as the 'crowd' and Heidegger designates as 'das Man'" (1988, 96) – although for some reason the reference to Heidegger is omitted in the English translation. This common We, the genuine communion of fellow humans within which being is bound up, is what is expressed in Heraclitus's cryptic utterances. With an eye to Heidegger, Buber stresses that "Heracleitus' teaching accepts the being of beings [*das Sein des Seienden*] in all its manifoldness and knows no other harmony than that which arises out of its tensions", but nevertheless "he finds the meaning of being [*den Sinn des Seins*] not in the ground of separateness but in what is common to all" (93).[77] In Buber's appropriation, the unsurmountable *polemos* between concealment and unconcealment that Heidegger finds expressed in Heraclitus gives way to an underlying common logos enacted in the live moment of essential dialogue, through which the manifoldness of being is exposed in its ultimate unified nature (2000b, 64-6). It is clear that both Buber's and Heidegger's accounts of logos seek to ward off the established Christian legacy of *Logos Christi*. But the disparity between the ontological and the anthropological interests once again comes to the fore, as does the diverging perspectives on the possibility of ontological presence and ultimate synthesis. Heidegger's Heraclitus brings to the fore the juncture of revealing and concealing in the event of being which takes hold over humans, while for Buber it is the togetherness of fellow humans in their determination of being's meaning that is betrayed by the enigmatic Greek thinker.

And yet, Buber's resort to the pre-Socratic thinker is curious. Heidegger's reading of Heraclitus is anchored in two convictions. The first, that language is a repository of previously undetected meanings that can be revealed through a rather idiosyncratic technique of exegesis. The second, that the pre-Socratics had an originary attentiveness to being uncontaminated by the history of metaphysics (while at the same time part of that history), and as such present themselves as particularly insightful sources

[76] Translation amended.
[77] Translation amended.

for thinking beyond metaphysics. Buber, however, shares neither of these presuppositions. In his essay "Man and his Image-Work", he even explicitly attacks Heidegger's hermeneutics for being "so grandiose a deed of violence" (1988, 142-3). Furthermore, the contrast between Athens and Jerusalem - with the obvious spiritual supremacy of the latter – is not only a structure through which Buber expresses his views, it is part and parcel of his very argument: Athens needs the message of Jerusalem for its own sake. Purporting to resurrect the prophetic and Hasidic attitude is thus quite different than emulating Heidegger in reclaiming a Greek thinker as a moment of originary thinking. Buber's harking back to Heraclitus becomes ever more curious when we consider that elsewhere he posits the Greek account of logos *as presented by Heraclitus* and taken up as the Word by the "Hellenizing Gospel of John" *in contrast* to the Hebrew Bible's account (1968, 215). Seemingly aware of this, Buber discursively links Heraclitus to "the Israelite prophets" and claims that the Pre-Socratic too "arose from the heart of the East". He also justifies the appeal to Heraclitus by noting that it "is for the sake of a specific need of our time" (1988, 87), which is, above all, confronting the self-glorified and absolutized individualism – a likely allusion to Heidegger. However, equating the prophets and Heraclitus deepens rather than resolves the difficulty.

Also problematic, as Buber himself recognizes, is looking for ontological grounding in Heraclitus' self-contained cosmos where "there is no real transcendence" (99). Alluding to Deuteronomy, Buber admits: "No salvation is in sight for us, however, if we are not able again 'to stand before the face of God' in all reality as a We – as it is written in that faithful speech that once from Israel […] started on its way" (ibid). To fill the lack of theological a-priori, Buber turns to salvage once again another one of Heidegger's steadfast sources. "In our age", he exclaims, "this We standing before the divine countenance has attained its highest expression through the poet, through Friedrich Hölderlin" (ibid). In setting out his alternative to Heidegger, Buber draws on two of Heidegger's central sources - one buttressing the ontology of the We, the other adding to it a theological orientation.

In the essay "The Word that is Spoken" (presented 1959, published 1960), this overarching structure is recovered. Written as a contribution to a conference he organized together with Heidegger, Buber develops in this essay a theory of language as a concealed response to Heidegger (Mendes-Flohr, 2014;

Bieman, 2003, 178-83).[78] As will become immediately clear, underlying this effort is a covert reissuing of the confrontation between Heidegger's poet and the biblical prophet. Buber approaches the nature of language in "The Word that is Spoken" through the intersubjective realm of 'the between', and focuses on the actual occurrence of language, that is, "its spokenness, or rather being spoken – the word that is spoken". This emphasis on the spokennes of language should be understood as responding to Heidegger's point that not humans but rather "*Die Sprache spricht*". Buber counters the "monological primal character of language" advanced by Heidegger by claiming that language is primarily address, actual dialogue between people in a situation. Dialogue thus holds ontological primacy over monologue: "language never existed before address; it could become monologue only after dialogue broke off or broke down" (1988, 105). As part of his effort to distinguish between his account of the nature of language and Heideggerian monologism, Buber develops a dialogical conception of poetry. In various writings, Heidegger states that poetry reveals language in its radical nearness and complete otherness and draws attention to the happening of language itself. "The primary language is poetry as the founding of being", he writes (GA 4, 43/Heidegger, 2000a, 61). The poet, aware of the force and limitation of language, can prompt others to have an experience with language and its working. Clearly alluding to Heidegger's position, Buber similarly posits poetry as the manifestation of genuine language, understood as dialogue: "The poem is spokenness", he declares, "spokenness to the Thou, wherever this partner might be" (108). In the essay "Man and his Image-Work", itself an attempt to formulate an alternative to Heidegger's reflections on art from his dialogical perspective, Buber underscores the preeminence of poetry:

> "Poetry does not originate from one of the senses' standing over against the world, but from the primal structure of man as man […] poetry is not obedient to anything other than language, whether it calls and praises, narrates, or allows the happening between men to unfold in dialogue" (155).

In "The Word that is Spoken", the Heideggerian poet comes under tacit reprimand for overlooking the "personal texture of speech" at the heart of language, its location in 'the between' of the speakers. "Were there no more genuine dialogue, there would also be no more poetry" (101), Buber declares. On the

[78] Heidegger's lecture in this conference, "On the Way to Language" ["*Der Weg zur Sprache*"] indirectly addresses Buber and will be discussed below. Cf. Pöggeler (1986, 149-51).

other hand, Heidegger's anonymous and monological account of language lacks "the ontological basic presupposition of conversation" and hence lacks "the otherness, or more concretely, the moment of surprise" (103) that exists in dialogue.

Similarly hinting at Heidegger and putting his vocabulary to use, Buber makes the harsh point that

> "many modern - and that means often de-Socratizing – philosophers have fallen, with the totality of their thought world, into a monologizing hubris, something which rarely happens to a poet. But this monologism, which, to be sure, is well acquainted with the existentialist but not with the existentiell, means in all its conjuring force the starkest menace of disintegration" (103).

This critique is directed in part against what Buber sees as Heidegger's general neglect of the ontic and concrete 'existentiell', which generates an overly abstract character to his ontology. But it is also a reproach of Heidegger's style of philosophizing. According to Buber, the poetizing in which Heidegger himself participates - perhaps perceiving himself as the poet bringing forth the destiny of being – is precisely a "monologizing hubris" wherein he violently imposes his views on the thinkers with which he is allegedly engaged in dialogue.

In his reflections on poetry, Buber also responds to Heidegger's idea of the co-belongingness of the truth and untruth. Recounting an ancient Indian myth about the blending of truth and falsehood, Buber explains that falsehood concerns the ambiguity of language, while truth emerges with the transparency of the spoken word. Dialogue, then, is the event of arrival at full clarity of language in its spokenness with another, i.e., the establishment of truth. Yet Buber makes clear that by 'truth' he means his biblically anchored *emuna*, in contrast to Heidegger's 'Greek' idea of *aletheia*:

> "The truth that is concerned in this fashion is not the sublime 'unconcealment' [*Unverborgenheit*] suitable to Being itself, the *aletheia* of the Greeks; it is the simple conception of truth of the Hebrew Bible, whose etymon means 'faithfulness' [*Treue*], the faithfulness of man or the faithfulness of God" (110).

Echoing his earlier distinction between *pistis* and *emunah*, Buber unmistakably contrasts Heidegger's account of truth with his own biblically-construed understanding. Dialogue, on his account, is not based on the disclosure of being in and through language, but on the biblical notion of *emunah*, of *getreue Wahrheit*, enacted in the dialogical immediacy of inter-human and human-divine embrace.

This means, according to Buber, that language springs from actual, living situations and has little to do with 'the Thing' [*Das Ding*], as Heidegger discusses in a 1959 lecture on Stefan Georg's poem "Das Wort", which Buber attended (Kraft, 1966, 80; GA 12, 147-204, 205-26/ Heidegger, 1971, 57-108, 139-56). "Not things but situations are primary", Buber announces. "And if Stefan Georg's saying that no thing exists for which the word is wanting ["*Kein ding sei, wo das wort gebricht*"] may hold true for things, it is inapplicable to the situations that man is given to know before he comes to know the things" (106). This understanding of language is emblematically reflected and crystalized in the prophetic utterance, which Buber repeatedly stresses is proclaimed in an actual living situation. In dialogue, moreover, there is a convergence of the achievement of clarity and truth in language, and the attainment of authenticity and truth of human existence. "The relation between meaning and saying", Buber professes, "points us to the relation between the intended unity of meaning and saying, on the one side, and that between meaning and saying and the personal existence, on the other side" (109).[79] The transition from ambiguity to transparency in dialogue is concomitant to the existential fulfilment achieved by ascending from the I-It to the I-Thou encounter. "Genuine dialogue", he states elsewhere, "is an ontological sphere which is constituted by the authenticity of being" (76). The ontological stakes of this moment are obviously high, for "the fate of being is determined through the speaking of the word" (119). But, as we know, for Buber 'being' is above all human existence. And thus, once again turning Hölderlin against Heidegger, he stresses: "We *are* a dialogue"[80] - "Hölderlin says not 'since we are in dialogue'; he says and means: since we are a dialogue. The explanation 'since the gods bring us into the dialogue' (Heidegger) is simply not what is said. We ourselves are dialogue: we are spoken […] Our being-spoken is our Dasein" (Bieman, 2003, 83-5). Human existence is poetic inasmuch as it cultivates a mode of being marked by an openness to the dialogical encounter in "the faithfulness of man or the faithfulness of God" (1988, 110). Humans are thus truthful when they dwell poetically, that is, prophetically, that is, dialogically.

[79] A similar exposition of the crystallisation of the language-being correspondence in the notion of Logos is found in "What is Common to All".
[80] This line from Hölderlin's *Hyperion* concludes the original German version of "What is Common to All", but not the English version.

Buber's response to Heidegger is illuminated by Heidegger's "Way to Language" (GA 12, 241-57/ Heidegger, 1971, 111-36), which is itself in part a critique of "The Word that is Spoken". The essay begins with a quote from Novalis's *Monologue*, a title which Heidegger interprets to mean "language speaks solely with itself". For him, the fact that language could be used dialogically between people does not mean that dialogue is the essence of language. "The essence of language", he affirms, "cannot be anything linguistic" understood ordinarily (GA 12, 108). Language for Heidegger is not "einen Bestand von Wörtern" but rather an ontological structure, a pre-linguistic, originary, world-disclosive feature, orienting us towards things which emerge as an organized setting within which their meaning and importance is obtained (Wrathall, 2011, 119-55; Dahlstrom, 2013). Through a dynamic of disclosure and concealment, it gathers and lays out references into a coherent, unified context, stabilizing meaning and relations in such a way that things can be made known. Through the 'soundless voice' of language, some things and possibilities stand out as salient, relevant, and meaningful, while others recede, and others still lack the opening to be disclosed and remain concealed. Language is the 'house of being', as Heidegger famously puts it, as it provides the underlying structure of meanings that allow beings to be intelligible to us as what they are.

For this reason, human dialogue cannot be ontologically prior to language's monologue according to Heidegger. In Buber's view, humans *have* language; they guide it along through the 'between' of their encounter. Language as dialogue is a response, from within, to human encounter. For Heidegger, this is only possible because "language […] is the foundation of human being" (1971, 112), it is the 'saying' or 'showing' that essences and lets things appear as something about which humans can conduct a dialogue. In this respect, language *has* humans; it leads them in its monological self-saying. "We do not merely speak *the* language", Heidegger points out, "we speak *by way* [or – from out] of it" (124). As such, it can be said to be a monologue of two, or a dialogue of one: it is a wellspring through which and by which utterances are made in our ordinary language. In this essay, Heidegger pointedly sets himself against the position, extending from the Greeks to Wilhelm von Humboldt, that perceives language in terms of the activity of human speech. Buber, who utilizes Humboldt's distinction between language as firm system (*ergon*) and language as a living human phenomenon of speech (*energiea*), and who refers

favourably to Humboldt in his lecture, is heir to this legacy. This legacy is all too anthropological, all too instrumentalist-metaphysical, all too humanistic for Heidegger. It deals with ordinary, rather than originary language. As he notes to his Japanese interlocutor in "A Dialogue on Language": "the much discussed I/Thou experience, too, belongs within the metaphysical sphere of subjectivity" (ibid, 35-6).[81]

For the present discussion, the insoluble dialectic of presencing and absencing performed by originary language entails that Heidegger makes little sense of ultimate transparency as the goal of ordinary language. "The poetic work speaks out of an ambiguous ambiguousness", an ambiguity that is inexhaustible and insurmountable. This deems it so that "the language of our dialogue might constantly destroy the possibility of saying that of which we are speaking" (15). Thus, Heidegger interprets the line "since we are dialogue" from Hölderlin's *Hyperion* – "even when man's ability to speak is present and is put into practice, the essential event of language – conversation – does not necessarily occur", followed by the statement Buber criticized above (Heidegger, 2000a, 57). While Buber crowns the poetic, but "incomparably still more" the "messagelike [*botschaftsartigen*] saying" – *Botschaft* being a term frequently employed by theologians at the time to denote the prophetic or divine Word (Barth, 1947) - Heidegger claims that "the word is a hint" (1971, 27). In Buber's account, language belongs to the present moment and hence lacks hermeneutic mediation, while Heidegger accounts for the human ecstatic-temporal ability to employ receptive creativity, draw on previous lingual currency, take it over, rearrange, and reiterate it in and for a specific situation. For him, the "moment of surprise" in language does not emerge from the not-yet-known response of one's interlocutor, but from language's "releasing into the open whatever might be said" wherein the partners in dialogue "confidently entrust themselves to the hidden drift" (30). The "otherness" Buber proclaims absent in Heidegger's account is in truth the more acute otherness of what is left concealed, rather than the merely not-yet-spoken.

[81] One might find an intermediating position between Heidegger and Buber in Paul Celan, who insists, with Heidegger, that language speaks to the poet, but who also sides with Buber in the view that the self of the poet is nevertheless profoundly present in the poem, as well as in the notion that a poem is a call for an other, a dialogue: "A poem as a manifestation of language, and thus essentially dialogue, can be a message in a bottle, sent out in the – not always hopeful – belief that somewhere and sometime it could wash up on land, on heartland perhaps. Poems in this sense too are underway: they are making forward something" (1983:186). Interestingly, an early version of Celan's famous poem "Todnauberg" began with the Hölderlinian citation "Seit ein Gespräch wir sind". Gellhaus (2002).

The examination of elements of Buber's ontological scheme as an alternative to Heidegger allows us to assert that the fullness of this philosophical mismeeting lies beyond the framing of dialogism versus monologism. In his thinking, Buber seeks to salvage the West's monolithic and monological manner of thought by pointing to the implicit multivalence and tension within reality; the numerous dualisms that mark his writings testify to this (Shapira, 1993). But for all of Buber's talk of the 'between', duality, dialogue, and relation, his scheme is oriented towards ultimate synthesis. This is not a Hegelian synthesis, for it does not represent a climax of history, the I-Thou encounter always founders back to the I-It, and Buber insists on the apophatic element that is absent in Hegel. Nevertheless, the openness to the multeity and flux of being that constitutes the dialogical disposition is undergirded by a transcendental wholeness that makes possible the attainment of full transparency, presence, and encounter – even if it is only momentary, fleeting, and rare. It acknowledges the dimension of It but strives to the Thou; emerges from the historical but points toward the ahistorical. Even poetry strives toward the 'messagelike' saying. In this respect, the duality and multiplicity that feature prominently in Buber's dialogical thinking presuppose a monotheistic unity of being, while the monologism of Heidegger, with its interaction between presencing and absencing and with the ec-statically temporal features of Dasein and language, reveals an unsynthesizable dialogism, a dialectic that does not promise full transparency or arrival. Since there is no stepping out of the hermeneutical circle and being is always also concealed, Heidegger's scheme can make no sense of 'ultimate unconcealment' as its goal. Heidegger confers an ontology of non-synthesis while Buber strives for wholeness and higher unity. Indeed, Buber's debt to the metaphysical ontological tradition is testified in his non-ecstatic account of self, ahistorical moment of presence, and unmediated account of language. It becomes clear, then, that the conceptuality undergirding Buber's call to 'dwell prophetically' remains within the ontological constrictions that Heidegger's poetic dwelling seeks to overcome.

Conclusion

According to Buber, the Heideggerian account of man has dire existential, theological, moral and political ramifications. Reflecting the enduring tendencies of Gnosticism magic and the comprehensive It modality driving them, Heidegger's existential analysis in *Sein und Zeit* as well as his urge to 'dwell

poetically' in his later writings reflect a monological existence confined to a hermetical immanence lacking the possibility of a full and unmediated encounter with the plenitude of the other and God. While it is questionable whether Heidegger would identify himself in these polemical presentations, Buber puts forth his dialogical worldview as the Jewish-biblical alternative to this monological outlook. More specifically, he offers the prophet as the model of truthful and dialogical existence, driven by a religious, political, and ethical impulse and animated by trust and poetical openness toward the possibility of an encounter with a Thou at any given moment. This, Buber believes, is the message that can reinvigorate the precipitating decline of the modern world, of which Heidegger's philosophy is both a symptom and a glaring manifestation. By examining his efforts to promote his dialogical attitude both before and after the War, as well as the related endeavor to counteract Heidegger's position, it emerges that Buber perceived himself as a modern-day prophet, performatively addressing the world from within a situation, combating the pagan idolatry of false-prophets and proclaiming the salvific message of prophetic-dwelling. As we shall see in the following chapter, Leo Strauss also perceives Heidegger's philosophy to be the exemplar of the modern crisis. Yet for Strauss, it is not Heidegger's monologism but his assault on 'truth' and its ramifications for the possibility of political philosophy and Judaism that typifies the modern crisis and which ought to be overcome.

Chapter 5: The Destruktion of Jerusalem: Leo Strauss on Heidegger's Historicism and Modern Judaism

Introduction

Heidegger's pivotal impact on Strauss's thought is widely acknowledged. As one commentator notes: "One could almost say that Heidegger is the unnamed presence to whom or against whom all of Strauss's writings are in large part directed" (Smith, 1997, 346). This view is confirmed by Strauss himself, who proclaimed that "the only question of importance […] is the question whether Heidegger's teaching is true or not" (1995a, 305). While much has been written on Strauss and Heidegger, the present chapter focuses on Strauss's understanding of Heidegger's bearings on Judaism. Its argument is twofold: first, that Strauss's lifelong grappling with matters Jewish are importantly marked by the philosophical, theological, and political challenges reflected in Heidegger; and second, that Strauss's engagement with Heidegger unfolds within the context of his reflections on the Jewish engagement with modernity, understood as a project indebted to the Christian horizon.

Strauss's initial personal and philosophical encounter with Heidegger took place as a young Jewish student in the momentous Weimar years (Sheppard, 2007; Janssens, 2008; Armon, 2010; Tanguay, 2007). In 1921 Strauss submitted his dissertation on Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, written under the supervision of Ernst Cassirer, about whom he later remarked that he "was a distinguished professor of philosophy but he was no philosopher" (1988a, 246). By contrast, during the 1920s Strauss was completely taken by Heidegger (Strauss, 1997, 267). According to a recollection of one of Strauss's friends of youth, "Heidegger was the only living philosopher about whom Strauss regularly spoke" (Udoff, 1991, 26-7n63). Moving to Freiburg for a postdoctoral year, Strauss attended Heidegger's lectures, and although not part of the close circle of his students, he followed him back to Marburg. Strauss ultimately fled Germany and eventually settled in the United States, but throughout his entire intellectual life, he would repeatedly note the great impression Heidegger had had on him (1997, 461). While he claims to have ceased to take interest in Heidegger "for about two decades" (ibid) after the latter's siding with the Nazi party, recent publication of previously unknown material, including various

lectures and correspondences, strongly contest this claim. Evidently, his occupation with Heidegger persisted throughout, and continued until the very end of his life.

Athens, Jerusalem, and the Crisis of Modernity

A key assumption of Strauss's intellectual effort is that two compelling yet distinct attempts to address the ultimate question of the life worth living have animated the West. The determinative question is this:

> "whether men can acquire knowledge of the good without which they cannot guide their life individually or collectively by the unaided effort of their natural powers, or whether there are dependent for that knowledge on Divine Revelation. No alternative is more fundamental than this: human guidance or divine guidance" (1953, 74).

The one advocates obedience to divine law as the proper life path, while the other promotes the path of life based on human wisdom. Symbolically formulated through the binary of Athens and Jerusalem, these two competing alternatives promote incompatible accounts of the human perfection, reason, morality, and divine law. They derive from fundamentally divergent assumptions and are conceptually irreconcilable, but since at times they concur in implication, they are practically or politically regulatable. This fundamental schematization of Athens and Jerusalem, comprehensively articulated in Strauss's mature works but present in his thinking from early on, presupposes the historical existence of these 'pure types' as well as their irreconcilability. Buying into Strauss's programme depends to a large degree on the acceptance of these premises, as well as on the acceptance of the characteristics he attributes to the two perspectives.

In Strauss's view, upholding and engaging with the dialectical tension between Athens and Jerusalem is the secret of the West's vitality. However, this is no longer the case in the modern world, which has continuously repressed this conflict. From its very beginning, Strauss diagnoses, modern thought has posited that the enlightenment has successfully refuted revelation. Athens has been announced victorious over Jerusalem. In his first book, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (1930), Strauss claims that the basis of the modern rejection of revelation is the Epicurean idea that the liberation from fear of the gods is the path to *eudaimonia*. For the modern Epicureanism, it is modern reason and science that bestows the knowledge that liberates from religion. Yet Strauss's scholarly explorations into Spinoza and other early founders of the modern enterprise fail to find in their works a *refutation* of revealed

religion (Strauss, 1930). Equipped with a *factum brutum* conception of revelation as put forth by Barth and Rosenzweig, Strauss posits revelation to be miraculous and thus irrefutable (1997, 460).[82] The all-encompassing modern faith in reason and science as the standards of truth, he submits, is precisely that – faith, a *petitio principii*, an unproved decision. Upholding this strict distinction between knowledge and belief, Strauss announces that modern thought is problematically established on unsteady grounds, for in its centre lay a failed confrontation with the religious question. The fundamental question of the life worth living is no longer raised, even though the dispute between reason and revelation, atheism and orthodoxy, was never settled. Indeed, it is as open as it was in the past, and ever so pressing.

Strauss's portrayal of both orthodoxy and the enlightenment is schamatic. The multiplicity of premodern faith and the multifacetedness of the enlightenment project(s) and varying relation to religion and faith are painted in broad and unifying strokes. But this is precisely his point: their variances notwithstanding, there is a fundamental difference between premodern and modern positions. For this reason, Strauss calls modern philosophy into question and seeks to reactivate the quarrel between reason and revealed religion in order to return to the fundamental question of the life worth living, which he considers to be the cardinal concern of political philosophy. While there is ample evidence that Strauss perceived himself as a citizen of Athens, his anti-dogmatic understanding of the task of philosophy behooved him to second-guess the claims of Athens and take the claims of Jerusalem seriously. As he writes:

> "No one can be both a philosopher and a theologian, or, for that matter, some possibility which transcends the conflict between philosophy and theology, or pretends to be a synthesis of both. But every one of us can be and ought to be either one or the other, the philosopher open to the challenge of theology, of the theologian open to the challenge of philosophy" (1997, 116).

He thus calls for a return to the wisdom of ancient and medieval philosophy as well as to what he takes to be the supreme embodiment of revealed religion, namely, the Hebrew Bible and premodern Jewish monotheism. Rethinking the traditions of thought of Athens and Jerusalem, he believes, can serve as the remedy of modern thought, which reached the peak of its crisis with the moral and intellectual

[82] On Strauss's attraction to dialectical theology *en route* to his mature thought, see Moyn (2007); Lazier (2012, 93-110); and Meyer (unpublished).

bankruptcy of Martin Heidegger. As we shall see, there is an intimate connection between Strauss's critique of Heidegger and his analysis of Judaism.

Heidegger and the Modern Jewish Crisis

While there is no denying significant developments in Strauss's thinking over the years, the philosophical issues that occupied his early Weimar writings, such as the crisis of liberalism and rationalism, questions regarding God, revelation, political authority, and law, remain consistent themes throughout his life (cf. Strauss, 1988b). The philosophical innovations he is most known for, such as his discovery of the art of "exoteric writing" and the precarious political relation between philosophy and the city, as well as the question of natural law and natural right in modernity, all draw on sustained outlooks shaped between the wars, further developing and deepening these earlier reflections. In this respect, Strauss's thought as a whole can be seen as stemming fundamentally from his wrestling with what he would later call "the theologico-political predicament" as a German Jew in Weimar. Strauss testifies that "I believe I can say, without any exaggeration that since a very, very early time the main theme of my reflections has been what is called the 'Jewish question'" (1997, 312). In his analysis, the 'Jewish question' is predicated on a particular conception of religion matching liberal democracy, wherein "the bond of society is universal human morality, whereas religion (positive religion) is a private affair" (1965, 3). This privatization forced modern Judaism to compromise its traditional heritage, for which the stringent compartmentalization between internal (faith) and external (law) is foreign, and accommodate itself to the new political and theological conceptuality of the age.

Strauss's investigations into the early founders of modern thought, and above all Spinoza, are best understood in light of this background and conceptual drive. The Dutch philosopher did not only level a blistering critique of revealed religion and was an early and important advocate of the modern liberal state, he also understood the two as interlinked, treating them as a *theologico-political* issue (Spinoza, 1991). Moreover, Spinoza's defence of the modern liberal state is the condition of possibility for Jewish emancipation, and political Zionism, representing the failure of the liberal promises to the Jews, is also associated with Spinoza's name. In Strauss's view, Spinoza offers a key into the basic premises of the intellectual project of modernity, but he also sheds light on the possibilities and limitations of modern

Judaism. It is thus misguided to draw a rift between Strauss's 'philosophical' and 'Jewish' writings – his life-long occupation with political philosophy is grounded in and touches on the very fabric of the modern Jewish experience and its conceptual underpinnings.

In a similar token, in almost every regard, the terms and premises of Strauss's continuous encounter with Heidegger are shaped in the interwar years. His early attraction to Heidegger (and Carl Schmitt) betrays a proclivity towards *pragmata* and a general anti-liberalism that furnished his desire to combat the 'lack of reality' [*Entwirklichtheit*] of exilic Jewish existence (Meier, 1995; Howse, 2014, 25-50). The mark of Heidegger can be discerned already in his early reflections on modern Judaism, when, for instance, he uses the Heideggerian notion of *Daseinsmöglichkeit* to describe the conundrum of Jewish existence in exile (Sheppard, 2007, 44). This occurs within the wider context of Strauss's critique of the contemporary Jewish situation and his conviction that syntheses and reconciliations with Christian or German post-enlightenment values are detrimental to both Judaism and Jews. "Germany", he writes, hinting to Hegel, is "the land of 'reconciliations' [*Versöhnungen*] and sublations [*Aufhebungen*]'", but "as Jews we are radical: we do not like compromises" (Meier, 2001, 359/ Strauss, 2002, 33). The aversion for syntheses will soon manifest itself in the assumption that the synthesis between reason and revelation is not the result of a bold confrontation between competing compelling worldviews but of the avoidance of such a confrontation. Syntheses in these matters amount to a conciliatory self-effacing and constitute an obstacle to truth. Reconciling Jewish tradition with modern values always consists in the denial of core aspects of Judaism. "One cannot simply absorb somewhat deeper German things", Strauss pens in an early essay, "without absorbing along with them, among other things, a dose of specifically Christian spirit" (2002, 69). Yet modern Judaism has done just that when it incorporated the enlightenment's presuppositions. The severe impact of what Strauss calls 'radical enlightenment', which posits the incompatibility of religion and reason and the decisive superiority of the latter over the former, undermines the foundation of Jewish tradition. The same is true with respect to 'moderate enlightenment' as well, which evinces a method of "internalization" [*Verinnerlichung*] of religious tenets and their 'harmonization' [*Vereinbarungen*] with the enlightenment's terms. This features especially in the Jewish thinking of Hermann Cohen, who, as Strauss testifies, was the revered "master"

in the Jewish environment in which he grew up. Translating this assessment into a piercing critique of present-day Jewish society, Strauss judges that cultural and religious Zionism, and especially liberal Judaism, are all hybrid systems that cannot satisfyingly solve the tensions between Judaism and modernity. They all offer modern secular solutions to a religious problem. His initial involvement with political Zionism also eventually receded for similar reasons.[83] The synthetic character of modern Judaism, he believes, attests to the victory of the modern enlightenment and its alleged refutation of religion.

Secularism and Historicism

To comprehend Strauss's critique of modern Judaism and its ties to his assessment of Heidegger, it is importance to note that in Strauss's mind, the covering up of the debate between revealed religion and reason is in a large part due to modernity's Christian legacy. He claims that historical Christianity sits comfortably in neither Athens nor Jerusalem because it commits the fallacy of attempting to encompass both. For him, the modern conception of reason is rooted in the Christian attempt to blend and reconcile philosophy and revelation (Strauss and Löwith, 1983, 106; Strauss, 1997, 252). The mutual trespassing into the other's domain made possible modernity's dogmatic assumption that reason can and has refuted revelation – a view Strauss attributes to Aquinas (1953, 163-4; Batnitzky, 2005; Batnitzky, 2006, 117-39, 238n39; Merrill, 2000, and Pelluchon, 2006). The implied ramification, that reason is sufficient, able to provide answers to all questions, and offer an exhaustive account of 'the whole', is an impractical expectation that ultimately prompted the pervasive distrust in reason that followed suit, culminating in Nietzsche and Heidegger. In this manner, the road to the modern secular society runs through Christian tradition.

This leads to an important point: not only is modernity's self-perceived superiority rooted in an imagined victory in a battle it is actually dodging, but its Christian heritage deems it secularized rather than secular. Now Strauss's view on secularization is not without ambiguity (Tanguay, 2007, 100-13; Górnisiewicz, 2010; Merrill, 2000; Pippen, 1992). On the one hand, few thinkers emphasize the discontinuity between the premodern and the modern as he does, especially in terms of the break

[83] Although he continues to appreciate political Zionism for practical reasons. Cf. Muller (2010).

between premodern natural law and modern natural right. On the other hand, from early on, he also seems to approve - with some reservations - the secularization theory with regards to modernity (Strauss, 1989, 82-3). He claims, for example, that "a case can be made for the view that all specifically modern ideas are merely secularized versions of Biblical ideas" (Meier, 2006, 143), or that "Modern philosophy is possible only as long as the biblical belief is not shaken to its basis" (Meier, 2004, 414). He also insists that while the mark of the intellectual project of the founders of the modern mind, such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Spinoza, is a negation of the Christian heritage, it nevertheless takes place within the determinations of the Christian horizon. For him, the crises-laded, post-Christian world of modernity is, in an important sense, post-*Christian* (Strauss, 2000a, 207).

Part of Christianity's contribution to the crisis of modernity is couched in the historical consciousness that emerged in the nineteenth century. "The 'factual and historical core' of historicism", Strauss writes to his friend Gerhard Krüger on 27 December 1932, "is […] 'the factical domination of Christ on the post-antique mankind'" (Meier, 2004, 415). The modern historicist outlook, represented by Hegel, stems from the Christian idea that truth is located *in* and ultimately determined *by* history. This soon led to the perception of ahistorical eternity as an essentially empty category. Historicism, in Strauss's rendition, is the belief that human thought and existence are historically conditioned and contextualized, and hence subject to change. It implies a denial of 'nature', that is, of timeless principles and permanent characteristics, and is therefore relativistic and nihilistic. It should be noted that the charge of relativism is a common attack on the historicist outlook from the perspective of neo-Kantianism and Husserl, although it is important to remember that not one of the historicists at this time considered himself a relativist (Beiser, 2007, 167). For Strauss, moreover, Historicism is also self-refuting, Strauss insists, since according to its own logic, it cannot serve as a ground rule for the validity of its own claim, as it is itself relativized by its historical context (Meier, 2006, 132; Strauss 1989, 115; 1953, 15-9). Historicism also baselessly presupposed progress inasmuch as it privileges the present perspective for judging the past. Driven by an unfounded sense of superiority, modern historicist thinking mistakenly assumes that the fundamental questions have already been answered, and that therefore it can 'progress'. For Strauss, however, philosophizing consists of raising the fundamental questions in search for

timeless truths, the validity of which transcend any given historical epoch. Historicism hampers this effort, and therefore forces upon philosophy an additional hindrance to its already difficult endeavor. Borrowing the Platonic image, Strauss likens the modern condition to "a second, much deeper cave than the lucky ignorant ones Socrates dealt with". As he explains, "the problem of the second cave is the problem of historicism" ~~the dubious outlook made possible by Christianity~~ (2002, 215).

Heidegger, perhaps even more then Nietzsche, represents for Strauss the pinnacle of modern secularization, historicism, and nihilism. In Strauss's view, modern historicism is epitomized in the centrality of Dasein's finitude, historicity, and the overall denial of eternity and 'nature' in Heidegger's work. The resulting moral depravity of such a denial manifests itself in Heidegger's political involvement. While Strauss refuses to reduce Heidegger's philosophy to his political misdeeds, he nevertheless identifies an "intimate connection" between Heidegger's thought and his endorsement of Nazism, believing that his relativistic contempt for "permanencies" ultimately led him to a decisionist embrace of Hitler (Strauss, 1988a, 26-7; 2000a, 212; 1983, 30; 1997, 461; 1995a, 307). It is indeed likely that the idea Strauss would soon develop concerning the dangers of politics for philosophy and philosophers is inspired by Heidegger's political misconduct.

In a letter from 1 July 1930 to Gerhard Krüger, Strauss states that the rejection of revealed religion among the early advocates of modern atheism - Machiavelli, Bruno and Spinoza – "attains its most extreme representation in Nietzsche and reaches its completion in – *Being and Time*, I mean, in the interpretation of the *call* of conscience, and in the answer given there to the question; *who* is calling?" (Meier, 2004, 380-1). Since, as Strauss maintains, "Religion is for the first time overcome when it can be given an adequate atheistic interpretation", Heidegger's replacement of divine revelation with Dasein's immanent 'call' is crowned as the culmination of the secularization process initiated in the seventeenth century. "Only from Heidegger's Dasein-interpretation can an appropriate *atheistic* interpretation of the Bible be possible". In this respect, the Christian project of melding Athens and Jerusalem is the condition of possibility of Heidegger's atheism. Indeed, Strauss considers Nietzsche's and Heidegger's critique of the consoling quality of religion as the "last and purest expression" of the enlightenment's Epicurean critique of religion. Their depiction of religion as an escape mechanism from

the terror of existence and man's abandonment is rooted in the virtue of 'probity'[*Redlichkeit*]. Yet 'probity' itself, according to Strauss, "is a descendent of the tradition grounded in the Bible […] a way of thinking which became possible only through the Bible" (1995b, 37). Thus, in his historicism, secularized existential thought, and rejection of faith by appeal to the "(secularized) Christian ethos of probity", Heidegger proves to be entangled in the conceptual world of Christianity that he seeks to overcome (Meier, 2004, 414). Heidegger's critique of modernity is not radical enough, and his secularism not secular enough.

By terming him an atheist and a secularized Christian, Strauss clearly denies the self-attested neutrality of Heidegger's philosophy. He similarly discredits the pretense of *Sein und Zeit* to constitute a break from modern philosophy. To the contrary; for Strauss, Heidegger represents the 'highest self-consciousness' of modern philosophy. But as the peak of modernity and its most profound thinker, Heidegger also typifies the modern crisis. For his atheist historicism ultimately denies the validity of revealed religion as well as the possibility of movement from opinion to knowledge, that is, the possibility of philosophy correctly understood. In other words, Heidegger obscures the Athens and Jerusalem dispute and obstructs the possibility of attending to the pressing questions of political philosophy, namely, the question of human excellence and "*the* good society" (Strauss, 1988a, 26).

Modern Judaism and Destruktion

Strauss's concern with modern atheism is not merely an intellectual exercise. It is driven by his existential conundrum as a Jew in a modern world. In the aforementioned 1932 letter to Krüger, Strauss reveals that his Spinoza book was an attempt to clarify his own disbelief and to distinguish it from Heidegger's atheism. "I must justify myself before the forum of the Jewish tradition", he remarks, "[…] simply because I hold it to be unacceptable that I abandon out of recklessness and convenience a matter for which my ancestors took upon themselves everything conceivable" (Meier, 2004, 414). For someone like himself who cannot believe, two options exist: The immediate one, found "in Heidegger among others", holds that "Christianity has brought to light facts of human life that were unknown or inadequately known to ancient philosophy". This option led to the modern historicist and atheistic philosophy by means of "secularization" and preservation of the "'truth' of Christianity" even "after

the decomposition of Christianity" (ibid, 414-5, 420). Strauss perceives all the modern Jewish options to be situated under this category. Already in 1930 he suggests that the one great contemporary thinker who can provide a portal into understanding "the religious situation of the present as *Jews*" is Heidegger, because the present religious situation is engulfed in the crisis represented by his thought (Meier, 2001, 377-91). Yet for someone who is after an "utterly a-Christian philosophy", there is the second option: the wisdom of ancient philosophy. Once the historicist commitments and prejudices are rescinded, a search for truth that transcends the present historical epoch becomes possible. Strauss thus calls on his fellow non-believing Jews to liberate themselves from the historicism of Heidegger and return to "the old, eternal, question, *the* primordial question", namely, "what is the *right* life? How *should* I live? What matters? What is needful?" (ibid, 380-2, 285). Leaving 'the cave', in Strauss's mind, demands tackling the question of the right life from the point where it was first posed. "It seems to me", Strauss submits in his letter to Krüger, "that modern philosophy brought to an *end*, leads to the point where Socrates begins." Alluding to Heidegger's role as the epitome of modern thought, he concludes, "modern philosophy proves to be a daunting 'destruction of tradition', but not 'progress'" (ibid).

This is an important utterance, for Strauss claims that his own move to recover the wisdom of the past is enabled and motivated by the constructive dismantling of Heidegger's 'destruction' (Strauss, 1983, 135, 137; 1997, 450, 462; Meier, 2004, xix). This adaptation, however, is also a correction, for in Strauss's understanding, Heidegger's 'destruction' presupposes that he understands past thinkers better than they understood themselves, which means his return is overwhelmed by modern historicist assumptions and hence not a return at all (Mewes, 1995; Ward, 1987; Jung, 1978). It should be noted that Heidegger's view on the matter evolved over the years. In the 1927-1928 winter lectures on Kant's First Critique he contends that "to understand Kant properly means to understand him better than he understood himself" (Heidegger, 1997, 2ff), and in the same year he repeats: "we not only wish to but must understand the Greeks better than they understood themselves" (GA 24, 157/ Heidegger, 1982, 111). Later on, he complicates this pretension. "A proper commentary", he observes in his reflections in "Nietzsche's Word: God is Dead", "never understands the text better than its author understood it, though it certainly understands it differently. Only this differing in understanding must be such that it

encounters the same thing which the explicated is mediating" (GA 5, 213-4/ Heidegger, 2002, 160). And in his "A Dialogue on Language" he grants: "our thinking today is charged with the task to think what the Greeks have thought in an even more Greek manner". To this his Japanese interlocutor replies: "and so to understand the Greeks better than they have understood themselves", to which the speaker representing Heidegger answers, "no, that is not it; for all great thinking always understands itself best of all, that is to say, *itself* within the limits set for it", and so what is needed is "to pursue more originally what the Greeks have thought, to see it in the source of its reality. To see it so in its own way Greek, and yet in respect of what it sees is no longer, is never again, Greek" (GA 12, 134/ Heidegger, 1971, 39). In appropriating and correcting the Heideggerian 'Destruktion', Strauss seeks to understand past thinkers as they understood themselves. While in Strauss's judgment Heidegger fails to do so successfully himself, he nevertheless opens the door to recovering neglected past possibilities, a task Strauss sets out to undertake. Heidegger's historicism, then, both exposes the modern crisis in all its acuteness and points to the history of thought as its possible remedy.

Heidegger's mark on Strauss is clear here: Strauss adopts Heidegger's framing of the modern predicament as an original forgetting to which the suitable response is 'Destruktion' and retrieval - as well as highlighting Christianity's role in this forgetting. Yet this does not mean that a naïve 'return' to the past is simple or even fully attainable (Strauss, 1978, 117). Strauss's anti-historicism is not anti-historical. Rather, he envisions a careful, tentative recovery of enduring insights from the history of philosophy which he believes hold saving power. It follows that a simplistic opposition between 'Destruktion' and 'recovery' misconstrues the differences between the two thinkers: they are, in truth, occupied with both, albeit differently (Smith, 1997). The return to pre-modern philosophy as a post-Heideggerian mindset betrays how Strauss follows Heidegger's footsteps in order to rehabilitate an intellectual trajectory in which 'nature' rather than 'time' is central, that is, one which does not result in Heidegger. ~~Stated otherwise:~~ Strauss appropriates Heidegger's trope and then turns it against him. Like Heidegger and some of his most notable students, including Hannah Arendt and Hans Jonas, Strauss too follows the graecocenteric German tradition and finds ancient Greece as the possible location from which germane insights can be retrieved (Beiner, 1996; Zuckert and Zuckert, 2014, 254-

88; Keedus, 2015; Wurgaft, 2016).[84] Importantly, however, the reconsideration of the project of modernity and the idea that the past is a repository of operative ideas for the contemporary world also opens the door for reassessing the options facing modern Judaism. For Strauss, this 'destruktion' reveals the possibility of recovering a Judaism emancipated from secularized-Christian determinations, and forces one to take seriously the mocked stance of orthodoxy, whereby the tensions between Judaism and modernity are unsolvable. As he writes in 1932, "the possibility emerged that European reservations vis-à-vis the Jewish tradition were no longer possible and necessary: the whole [*das integrale*] of Judaism appeared to become possible again" (Meier, 2001, 444). Strauss frames the task of surmounting the great obstacle standing before both philosophy and authentic Judaism as the task of overcoming Heidegger and what has become the code-word for his thought, 'radical historicism'.

This, then, is the paradoxical effect of Heidegger's philosophy: it typifies the crisis to which it also offers a direction for solution. By exposing the bankruptcy of modern philosophy and Jewish thought, it also opens the door to rehabilitate past positions long considered refuted. Heidegger's philosophy, then, is the darkest room in the second cave, but it is also in this room that an ascending passageway to the natural cave can be found.

Historicism, Historicity, and Nihilism

Heidegger's philosophy serves as the ultimate foil of Strauss's constructive programme, yet it is far from clear that his critique is entirely justified. For example, Strauss misreads the godless framing of *Sein und Zeit* to indicate that Heidegger presupposes that philosophy can and has refuted revelation. As we have seen in chapter 1, Heidegger designates each to a different domain, and thus ~~like Strauss~~ believes such a refutation is pointless and impossible. This does not mean that Strauss is mistaken in identifying the Christian mark on Heidegger's philosophy, in both content and method. It means, rather, that like Heidegger, Strauss's view concerning the impossibility of refuting revelation is itself theologically rooted, heir to the particular Protestant strand advocating for the separation of theology and philosophy which, as we have seen, was dominant in Germany at the time of his philosophical

[84] Strauss (Meier, 2004, 494) wrote to Jacob Klein on 14 February 1934 that Jonas too seeks "to return beyond Heidegger in the same direction as we do, although not so clearly".

maturation. His early attraction to Rosenzweig's and dialectical theology's irrefutable account of revelation supports this claim. Indeed, in a 1931 letter to Krüger Strauss describes his book on Spinoza as "a single answer [from the perspective of] unbelief to the belief of the Barth-Gogarten tradition, at least in its intent" (Meier, 2004, 393). His ensuing attempt to bracket Christianity out of the rivalry between Greece and the Bible, as well as his effort, which will be discussed below, to pose a Jewish account of revelation as law while consciously chiding the Rosenzweig-Barth position is nevertheless conducted within a framework laid out by these concealed theological assumptions.

Furthermore, in his analysis of Heidegger, Strauss mistakenly conflates historicism with historicity. The former denotes that knowledge and truth is conditioned by historical context, while the latter means that human existence takes shape in a hermeneutical process within the factical-historical experience of one's situation. These often overlap, but they are not identical. That this is the case can be evinced from the programme of *Sein und Zeit* itself, in which Heidegger outlines the ontological preconditions of the possibilities of Dasein's historical existence as such. He remarks, for example~~, in a rather Husserlian manner~~, that his analysis of average everydayness is after "not just any accidental structures, but essential ones which, in every kind of being that factical Dasein may possess, persist as determinative for the character of its being" (SZ 16-17/ BT 38). Dasein's temporality and historicity are precisely such persisting preconditions. This is a tension within *Sein und Zeit* that has been pointed out and debated by early and recent readers (Misch, 1929a; 1929b; Plessner, 1979; Guignon, 1984). In contradistinction to Strauss, for example, Jürgen Habermas determines that "with his steady focus on the invariant structures of Dasein, Heidegger from the start cuts off the road from historicity to real history" (Habermas, 1989). Likewise, Adorno, in his 1931 essay "The actuality of Philosophy" makes the point that Heidegger is hardly a historicist because by ontologizing time, temporality itself emerges as a-temporal (Adorno, 1977). Yet equating historicism with historicity or assuming the one necessarily implies the other leads to a misrepresentation of Heidegger's position. From the perspective of historicism, the gap between the past and the present is unrepairable; history can shed no light on our current situation and thus recovering it is futile. From the position of historicity, however, the past can potentially hold valuable insights for the present. Indeed, the conviction that under the debris of

traditional philosophy are insights worthy of confrontation is precisely what drives Heidegger's 'Destruktion'.

Strauss's misrepresentation also conceals the related point that while he finds little 'progressive' in modern philosophy "from its beginning till Heidegger *inclusively*", Heidegger too rejects the category of progress and the modern presuppositions that undergird historicism (Meier, 2004, 406; Bambach, 1995; Barash, 1985). The narrative animating his thought of origin, fall, oblivion and hope for retrieval is hardly a narrative of progression. A narrative of progression, moreover, presupposes an understanding of history as *Vorgang*, a process or series of events, which Heidegger considers to be present-at-hand, derivative, and an obstacle to a genuine reformation of the question of being. History for him is primarily *Geschichte*, a fateful happening (*Geschehnis*) wound up in being's sending. Thus, *pace* Strauss, Heidegger is in fact situated in opposition to the present-day historicist tendencies. The two men are allies in this regard, although their anti-historicist sentiments play out differently. For Strauss, the peril of historicism and its resulting nihilism is to be countered by the pursuit after permanencies and 'nature', irrespective of historical situation (Strauss, 1953, 30-3). For Heidegger the problem lays not in the fear of a contextualized truth that leads to nihilism, but in the philosophical assumptions that make this kind of logic possible in the first place. For him, "relativism and scepticism spring from a partially justified opposition to an absurd absolutism and dogmatism of the concept of truth" (GA 24, 316/ Heidegger, 1982, 221-2). By claiming that truth is irreparably affixed to the temporality of human existence and to the disclosure of being, Heidegger seeks to dispose of the category of a-historical perpetuity as an operative concept against which the problem of nihilism and relativism, as understood by Strauss, can emerge at all (Lampert, 1974). From his perspective, Strauss and the historicists differ in their expressed position but share an underlying nihilist logic: the projection of eternity is itself an attestation of nihilism. Strauss is therefore a nihilist for Heidegger, and Heidegger is a nihilist for Strauss.

There is little doubt that from Heidegger's perspective, Strauss's return to Plato and Socrates is futile, for it is precisely these figures who are responsible for the forgetting of being in the first place. Heidegger would contend that Strauss is equipped with the Platonic conception of truth as enduring

correctness and therefore perpetuates rather than confounds the problem. He would also likely find Strauss's stress on the ontic field of political philosophy to inherently fall short of the urgent ontological challenges and in principle be unable to offer a compelling alternative to his programme. But Strauss is no doubt aware of this, and it seems that his return to Plato, among other things, is an intentional move to undercut Heidegger's ontological fixation and his interpretation of Plato as an ontologist who reinterpreted being in terms of the 'most unhidden' and the illuminating *Idea*. For Strauss, "the beginning of philosophy is not the beginning", nor is the legitimacy of philosophy the correct starting point or a guaranteed presupposition. Heidegger's *Seinsfrage*, he posits, ignores the fact that philosophy is always conducted within a city, within a social and political context in which the very possibility of philosophizing has stakes and under threat. Strauss makes the point that politics and revelation can fundamentally call philosophy into question in a manner unrecognized by Heidegger. Thus, rather than affirming the priority of the *Seinsfrage*, Strauss defiantly writes in 1949: "The question Plato *or* existentialism is today the ontological question" (Emberley and Cooper, 1993, 63).

Maimonides against Heidegger

In his book *Philosophie und Gesetz: Beiträge zum Verständnis Maimunis und seiner Vorläufer* (1935), Strauss makes clear that his imploration to 'leave the cave' pertains in particular to his contemporary Jewish world. In this work he rehearses his critiques of modern Judaism and begins to develop a response to modern atheism and historicism from the 'sources of Judaism'. The crux of this work is a chapter-long attack on Julius Guttmann's 1933 classic work *Die Philosophie des Judentums* and the Neo-Kantian epistemological inflection of its analysis of medieval Jewish philosophy in terms of 'science'. This, for Strauss, demonstrates Guttmann's underlying sense of the superiority of the modern perspective over medieval thought and his inability to understand the past on its own terms (Guttmann, 1974; Schweid, 1990; Meyer, 2009, 19-106; Wurgaft, 2014).

While not mentioned by name, Heidegger's twofold role of uncovering the inadequacy of modern Judaism and signalling the way towards its overcoming is evident here. Heidegger's philosophy and the Christian memory operating in it can be seen to be implicitly criticized through an attack on the anthropocentrism of *Existenzphilosophie*. Like many at the time, Strauss identifies in it a theological

mark, betraying a particularly Christian emphasis on the individual's freedom and a subjectivist model of religion. Here Strauss rebukes the modern focus on human consciousness, and even more so when "'consciousness' is replaced by 'existence', by 'man'" (1995b, 48). He links this emphasis to the modern a-political liberal and purportedly universalistic notion of subjectivity. To make his point, he takes Barth's fellow dialectical theologian Friedrich Gogarten's doctrine of creation, whereby "creation has meaning only as the creation of man" (49), as the unlikely example for the modern habit of tailoring everything to human standards. This conception of religion renders the absolute actuality of God "fundamentally incomprehensible" and therefore stands in unsolvable tension with traditional belief. The critique of Gogarten's *Existenzphilosophie* indirectly targets Heidegger as well as Rosenzweig's 'movement of return' to an existential and experiential Judaism, which in Strauss's view only returns to a post-enlightenment, Christianized version of Judaism (as will be discussed shortly). The inadequacy of Guttmann's idealism and *Existenzphilosophie* is further indicated when Strauss argues, with reference to Bultmann's biblical hermeneutics, that while "the existential philosophy does grasp more securely than idealistic philosophy the 'existential' sense of the Bible" (50) and idealism grasps the "memory" of the doctrine of creation, both are impoverished by modern limitations and effectively do not do justice to the belief in revelation as traditionally understood. Strauss's claim regarding idealism and *Existenzphilosophie* is that while seemingly different, they are in fact qualitatively similar.

The constructivity of the position linked to Heidegger is evident here as well. Strauss alludes to Heidegger in the introduction to this work, first, when he considers the radical version of modern atheism –associated elsewhere with Nietzsche and Heidegger - to be heir to the Bible, and second, when he speaks of idealism as fulfilling itself with "the discovery of the radical 'historicity' [*radikalen Geschichtlichkeit*] of man and his world as the definitive overcoming of the idea of an eternal nature, an eternal truth" (33). This discovery leads to a relativisation of the modern scientific worldview, now perceived as "one historically conditioned form of 'world construction' among others" (ibid). The calling into question the enlightenment's victory, in turn, "makes possible the rehabilitation of the 'natural world view' on which the Bible depends" (ibid).

With this critique, Strauss implies his social-religious critique of present day Jewish life. Through his attack on Guttmann's scientific historicism and Gogarten's *Existenzphilosophie*, Strauss targets what he takes to be the German-Jewish tendency of derogating the legal and political charge of traditional Judaism in order to neutralize possible tensions with the modern liberal German state. Law and politics is beyond the purview of this intellectualized or experiential version of Judaism. Of course, it can be argued that this is hardly an a-political interpretation of Judaism, but rather a political interpretation running counter to Strauss's anti-liberalist and even Schmittian sensibilities. But the point of the rebuke of the modern Jewish options is to propose to leave the horizon of modern enlightenment and "apply for aid to the medieval Enlightenment – the Enlightenment of Maimonides" (Green, 1993; 2013a; Green, 2013b). Within the modern philosophical horizon, this return is paradoxically the true 'new thinking'.

Admittedly, in this work Strauss does not offer the reader a robust account of the Maimonidean programme to which to return. But the central indication he puts forth is crucial: On this medieval account, revelation is neither a matter of belief nor of knowledge. A strictly epistemological understanding of revelation as doctrinal knowledge, which Strauss considers Christian, gives itself to the scholastic effort of fusing philosophy and theology, eventually leading, as noted, to modern atheism. In contrast, Maimonides' Jewish conception (like his mediaeval Islamic companions) understands revelation as revealed law, which secures the separate domains and hence the nature and integrity of reason and revelation. Strauss clearly agrees with Kant's account of Judaism as legalism, although he transvalues the negative connotation it donned through Kant's Lutheran perspective. For him, the conception of revelation as law centres attention on the intermediary figure of the prophet and his political function. Strauss's offers a 'Platonic' interpretation of Maimonides's prophetology, according to which the prophet, who unlike the philosopher is naturally perfected in wisdom *and* imagination, has access to truths beyond the scope of human cognition (such as creation), and transmits truths that are essential to the existence and stability of the community to the unqualified multitude through imaginative renditions. The prophet communicates esoteric knowledge exoterically for the sake of political stability and human perfection. Unlike the modern epistemological versions of prophecy, this

Maimonidean-Platonic account of the prophet as lawgiver highlights the pre-modern rationalism whereby reason is indispensable but also insufficient and acknowledges the pre-philosophical, public, and distinctly political function of revelation.

Looking to 'the enlightenment of Maimonides' as a way out of the contemporary intellectual frameworks is deeply situated within the interwar context, where a revival of 'archaism' took place. Strauss's charges against Guttmann, that "scientific knowledge of Judaism is purchased at the price of belief in the authority of revelation" is similarly an expression of the 'younger generation's' contestation against the Neo-Kantian emphasis on 'science' common at the time. Strauss is clearly reacting to the views around him, and while he is no doubt correct in pointing attention to the political dimensions of revelation, it would seem that contracting it to this dimension is just as limiting as its reduction to ethics or experience against which he protests. His call to return to Maimonideanism aims to transcend the modern faith-based theism-atheism construction, as well as the rational-irrational binary that dominated the intellectual environment of Weimar, as discussed in chapter 2. Judaism, he maintains, is best represented by the Maimonidean form of rationalism and its politicized centrality of revealed law. Strauss's celebration of Maimonides exhibits an aspiration to overcome the framework imposed by Christianity and to endorse a conceptuality that addresses the philosophical and existential issues essential to the nature of the human being in a way that Christianity and modern thought – and modern Judaism, beholden to their assumptions – cannot. The Maimonidean strand of medieval philosophy is offered as a way to overcome the synthetic configuration of modern Judaism marked by Heidegger's radical historicism and relativism. As before, it is discernible that Heidegger inspired Strauss to turn to mediaeval philosophy and rehabilitate Maimonides, who is then set against Heidegger. In fact, Maimonides is pitted both against Spinoza, whose life and critique of revealed religion inaugurated the contradictions that define modern Judaism and whose assertion of the sufficiency of human reason dominates modernity, and against Heidegger, whose dubious thought and political affiliation exposes the impasse of modern thought and the predicament of modern Judaism in its utmost extreme. And insofar as Spinoza and Heidegger mark the prologue and epilogue of the modern crisis, the

Maimonidean programme emerges not only as the saviour of modern Judaism, but as the saviour of Western tradition as a whole.

While the buds of Strauss's later developments are easily identifiable in *Philosophie und Gesetz*, it is nevertheless a transitionary work, and one which does not reach an unequivocal conclusion. How do we square the subjugation of divine law by practical philosophy and the claim that it imparts truth not given by philosophy? Does revealed law limit or expand the autonomy of philosophy? Who is superior - the philosopher or the prophet? Soon after the publication of this work, following his interpretation of the medieval Islamic philosophers, Strauss deepens and thereby alters his political interpretation of Maimonides' prophetology. Announced to be a citizen of Athens rather than Jerusalem, Maimonides is now depicted as seeking to covertly vindicate *philosophy* within the tension-filled relation between the philosopher and the multitude. The Maimonidean law-giving prophet is portrayed as a disguised Platonic philosopher-king whose main purpose is to establish a just polis, which requires the mysterious notion of divine law for its foundation, and at the same time to enable the possibility of philosophy by navigating between the mutual threats that the philosopher and the city potentially pose each other. It is in this context that Strauss, following Lessing, develops his idea of "exoteric writing", most famously in the essay "Persecution and the Art of Writing", as a path to mask subversive philosophical ideas from the masses. With this idea, Strauss attempts to lay bare, but also to balance without syntheses, the tensions between revelation and philosophy, praxis and theory, the philosopher and the city.

While Strauss modifies his view of the 'Great Eagle' in his mature works, it is important for our purpose to recognize that three crucial points remain unchanged (Bernstein, 2015). The first, Maimonides' functional role as a non-modern alternative to modern thought is retained. By submitting to the conception of reason that allows for the non-intelligibility of 'the whole', Maimonides circumvents the modern philosophical shortcomings and as such serves as a beacon towards which modernity should proceed. The second, by exposing Maimonides' acknowledgment of the political and legislative impositions on philosophy, Strauss continues to underscore the centrality of law for philosophy. This, as he repeatedly insists, requires a return to Plato and a siding with the Jewish (and Islamic) notion of religion, over against Christianity. The third, the critical assessment of modern Judaism that underpins

the call to return to Maimonides endures. That this is the case can be seen three decades later, in Strauss's famous 1965 'Preface to the English Translation' to his book on Spinoza. Here, in his reflections on his intellectual development as "a young Jew born and raised in Germany who found himself in the grip of the theologico-political predicament", not only does he reiterate his previous critical judgments of modern Judaism, at times *verbatim*, but he also straightforwardly harnesses Heidegger for the sake of this critique.

In the preface, Strauss echoes his critical assessments of liberalism as well as of political, cultural and religious Zionism, as tempting yet ultimately unsatisfactory stances for the modern Jew. He then turns to Rosenzweig's option of 'return', a religious path based on the experience of God. Here Strauss sets Heidegger and Rosenzweig, who he reads as an historicist, against each other. The purpose of this confrontation is to debunk the adequacy of Rosenzweig's new thinking for Jewish identity.[85] He begins by suggesting that there are significant differences between the two thinkers, certainly with regards to their stance on revelation. But as his analysis unravels, it becomes clear that this difference is eclipsed by more crucial similarities. To show this Buber's experience-based theology, introduced as a stand-in for Rosenzweig, is contrasted to Heidegger's new thinking, which rejects revelation and does not experience God. While, as noted, it is unlikely Heidegger would recognize himself in this description, Strauss mentions the Buber-Heidegger debate over the prophets' desire for comfort and "certainty of salvation" that was discussed in the previous chapter, clearly siding with Heidegger. The imperative is to accentuate Heidegger's debt to Christianity by making plain his commitment to the biblically rooted principle of 'probity' and highlighting the Protestant anthropology assimilated in his programme. "Heidegger wishes to expel from philosophy the last relics of Christian theology", Strauss reminds, yet "he interprets human life in light of 'being towards death', 'anguish', 'conscience', and 'guilt'; in this most important respect he is much more Christian than Nietzsche" (1965, 12). This claim is indicated in the references to *Being and Time* in the footnotes of the preface, where Strauss signals to Heidegger's inconclusive relationship to Christian traditions by referring to SZ §9, where "the anthropology of Christianity" is said to obstruct an appropriate investigation into Dasein's being; to SZ §44, where

[85] Strauss references to Löwith's essay on Rosenzweig and Heidegger in the preface.

Heidegger declares the idea of 'eternal truths' and human 'ideality' as "residues of Christian theology within philosophical problematics which have not as yet been radically extruded"; to SZ §40, where Heidegger remarks on the ontic Christian dealings with anxiety by Augustine, Luther and Kierkegaard; and to SZ §49, where Heidegger mentions the concept of death in "the anthropology worked out in Christian theology" from Paul to Calvin. By stressing the Christian horizon of Heidegger's anthropology, Strauss draws the analogy to Rosenzweig and Buber and affirms that their 'Jewish' thought does not differ in essence from Heidegger's Christianly-inflected scheme.

Strauss further confirms the inadequacy of Rosenzweig's position by criticizing his and Buber's experiential theology, once again engaging with Heidegger's conceptuality. Drawing on Heidegger's notion of 'the call', Strauss argues that from the perspective of experience alone, there is actual access solely to a subjective experience of a call, which is interpreted according to the predetermined assumptions of the experiencer, with no possibility of objective conformation (Cf. Meier, 2004, 380; Strauss, 1997, 124; Emberley and Cooper, 1993, 88-9). "Every assertion about the absolute experience which says more than that what is experienced in the Presence or the Call", he states, "[…] is an 'image' or interpretation". In an experience-based thinking, "that any one interpretation is the simply true interpretation is not known but 'merely believed'" (1965, 11). The difference between Rosenzweig and Heidegger, then, amounts to a difference in decision or point of view: Rosenzweig's Jewish presuppositions experience 'the call' with reference to the revelatory Jewish God and human creatureliness, while in Heidegger's 'atheist' framework, the call is disclosed as nothingness. The confrontation with Heidegger reveals that the thought of Rosenzweig (and Buber) is all too modern, all too Christian. Rosenzweig does not call for a return to traditional Judaism, but to a Judaism conditioned by the enlightenment and its Christian residues. "The fundamental awareness characteristic of the new thinking", be it by Heidegger, Rosenzweig, or Buber, "is a secularized version of the biblical faith as interpreted by Christian theology" (12). Thus, even if Strauss concludes the 'Preface' by declaring that his reading of Spinoza has changed since his youth days, his belated portrayal of the Weimar scene nevertheless reconfirms his early conviction that Heidegger's historicist, existentialist, and Christian thinking uncovers the deficiency of modern Jewish thinking.

Strauss and Later Heidegger

As Strauss's thought develops, he continues to respond to Heidegger's thought, overtly or covertly, in many of his writings, including his known work *Natural Right and History*.[86] While he continues to conceive *Sein und Zeit* as Heidegger's most important work presenting the most urgent challenge, he takes note of Heidegger's later developments as well. From different statements and references, it can be concluded that Strauss was fairly updated with the ongoing publications of Heidegger's works.[87] Unlike Buber, who identifies an important continuity in Heidegger's thought, Strauss submits to the view that Heidegger's thought underwent a robust *Kehre*. In his correspondence with Löwith over the recent publication of Heidegger's Nietzsche lectures, Strauss intimates that the transition from *Existenz* to *Sein* marks a "remarkable maturity" (Meier, 2004, 677, 674; Velkley, 2011, 54-61). At one point he even proclaims: "I myself feel now more strongly than ever the attraction exercised by Heidegger" (ibid, 684-5). The departure from the focus on Dasein's historicity confirms that Heidegger, "insofar as he is true to himself, in no way makes concessions to faith [*Glauben*]" (675). Since, as we have seen, Strauss holds that *Existenzphilosophie* is a fundamentally Christian philosophical perspective, the deviation from human historical existence represents a crucial step in the direction of de-Christianizing Heidegger's thought. However, insofar as modern philosophy is as a whole the continuation of Christianity by other means, it follows that Heidegger's later thought is also theologically-tainted. And indeed, while Löwith claims in their correspondence that also in his later writings "Heidegger's effort is a religious one" (673), Strauss maintains that his later thought is only 'religious' insofar as it is modern. This is reflected in Strauss's suggestion that the *Kehre* can be formulated as a move from Kierkegaard to Nietzsche. The latter, as we have seen, is beholden to the Christian horizon as well, yet this movement, he writes to Löwith, "strongly speaks to me" nevertheless, as it displays "where Heidegger wants to go".

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[86] Heidegger is explicitly mentioned in Strauss's following writings: 1988a, 9-55, 56-77; 1999 [with corrections: 2000b]; 1953, 7-34 ff.; Meier, 2006, 119, 124-5, 167; 1997, 246-50; 1989, 81-98, 99-124; 1989b, 24-6; 1983, 29-37; Strauss and Gadamer (1978); Emberley and Cooper, 63-66, 88-89. Heidegger's presence is palpable in numerous other texts as well.

[87] For example, in a footnote in "Philosophy as Rigorous Science", Strauss refers to five different works by Heidegger – *Was Heisst Denken*?, *Det Satz von Grund*, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, *Wegmarken*, and *Gelassenheit*. Velkley identifies two stages in Strauss's reaction to later Heidegger, corresponding to the publications of *Holzwege* in 1950 and *Nietzsche* in 1961. Cf. Zuckert and Zuckert (2014, 261-4).

Yet Heidegger's later thought presents Strauss with a conundrum. Consider, for example, the conception of epochal sendings of being and *Seinsgeschichte*. The radical notion of the historicity of being introduces the idea that being is unconcealed differently in different historical epochs. Does this constitute a deepening of the grip of relativistic historicism, and by implication, of Christianity? Or is it a stepping beyond Christianity, insofar as it betrays a diminished focus on the existential status of the individual subject? Moreover, the distinction between historical manifestations and underlying ahistorical structures and dynamics that marks *Sein und Zeit* remains at work in Heidegger's later works as well, for example, in the notions of *Ereignis* and language. On the one hand, Strauss finds in Heidegger's later thinking a reduced mark of Christianity and thus a more compelling form of philosophizing. In a letter from 1971 to Löwith he remarks that "for some time it has struck me that to my knowledge there is not a single place in Heidegger's writing where the name of Jesus appears, not once 'Christus' (unless it is in a Hölderlin interpretation that I do not know). That is indeed very noteworthy" (697). This is admittedly an odd observation, since Strauss himself cites from Heidegger's *Was heißt Denken*? in which one finds a discussion of Christ, Hercules and Dionysus in Hölderlin's poetry (Velkley, 2011, 59). On the other hand, Strauss also continues to recognize secularized biblical and Christian notions feature in Heidegger's later work. In the sixteenth session of a 1966 winter lecture course on Montesquieu at the University of Chicago, he associates Heidegger and Christianity and states: "In our age someone has taken the passage from the New Testament, 'The truth will make us free' and has said, 'Freedom will make you true'. This is only another formulation of the same thing. This was Heidegger, by the way".[88] He similarly points to theological resonances in later Heidegger in a 1970 public lecture, entitled "The Problem of Socrates". Here, among other things, Strauss discusses the insufficiency of Heidegger's claim that *Sein* is "*the* ground of all beings, and especially of man", because the question remains as to "what is responsible for the emergence of man and of Sein, or of what brings them out of nothing" (1995c).[89] Heidegger's answer, that it is nothing from which being

[88] Transcript available from: http://leostrausstranscripts.uchicago.edu/navigate/7/19/?byte=818732. This statement is a near-quote from Löwith's essay on Heidegger and Rosenzweig, demonstrating Löwith's impact on Strauss's understanding of Heidegger.

[89] The brackets are in the original, indicating that these words are found in the tape recording of the lecture but not in the anonymous transcriptions of the tape.

emerges, reminds Strauss of "the Biblical doctrine of creation [out of nothing]", yet he hastens to note that "Heidegger has no place for the Creator-God". It can be judged that Strauss's attitude towards Heidegger's later works is ambiguous. While it demonstrates an estrangement from existentialism and thus reflects an attempt at gesturing beyond the grips of Christianity, its main problem is that it remains incongruous with the idea of nature, and hence with political philosophy and its moral objectives.

East and West

Among the ideas Heidegger develops in his later work, Strauss is intrigued by the claim that the East possesses important insights for the revival of Western thinking (Strauss, 1983, 33). Heidegger's fascination with Eastern thinking– or a certain construction of it – can be traced to his early years, but it intensifies in the 1950s, when he speaks of the "inevitable dialogue with the East Asian world" (GA 8, 136/ Heidegger, 1977, 158; Parkes, 1990; Ma, 2008, esp. 113-6). Strauss's appeal to this idea is likely rooted in the notion that the East could potentially provide an alternative solution to the West's crisis, alongside and perhaps in place of Athens and Jerusalem. True to his basic assumptions, however, Strauss contends that Heidegger's formulation of the "dialogue and everything that it entails" discourages "political action of any kind" and is therefore deficient (1983, 33-4). Nevertheless, he endorses the idea of an East-West dialogue on his own terms. In the lecture "The Problem of Socrates", Strauss notes that for Heidegger the solution to the fragmentation of our thinking "cannot lie in a return to the supra-temporal or eternal but only in something historical: in a meeting of the most different ways of understanding life and the world, a meeting of East and West". In order to prepare this fateful meeting, Strauss resolves, "our first task would be the one in which we are already engaged – the task of understanding the Great *Western* Books" (1995c, 330). In this statement Strauss tellingly situates his own project of reviving political philosophy as complying to this Heideggerian imperative.

Earlier, in a lecture from February 8, 1956 entitled "Existentialism", Strauss draws the Heideggerian trope of East-West dialogue into the orbit of modern Judaism. This lecture, delivered at the Hillel Foundation of the University of Chicago, the Jewish campus organization, most likely to a crowd of considerable Jewish representation, can be read as a re-evaluation of the possibilities that Heidegger's de-Christianized later philosophy holds for the modern Jewish person. It should be noted that the lecture

was first published, posthumously, with two crucial deviations from the original transcript: the title was emended to "An Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism", and more importantly, the opening sentence, which runs as follows, was omitted: "This series of lectures – a reminder of the perplexities of modern man – should help the Jewish students in particular towards facing the perplexities of the modern Jew with somewhat greater clarity" (1995a, 303). This statement reveals that Strauss perceives the lecture series to be particularly relevant to Jewish students struggling with issues pertaining to their identity. In other words, his exploration into Heidegger's philosophy intends to address the existential perplexities of the modern Jew.

Characteristically, Strauss begins the lecture with accolades to Heidegger and with personal recollections from his student years. Heidegger's philosophy is a "revolution"; he is "the only great thinker in our time" and with respect to philosophical dominance and stature, he is to be compared to Hegel (304; cf. Straus, 1997, 246). At the same time, Heidegger is presented as the most pressing political, philosophical, and theological challenge. After a long build-up, Strauss attends to Heidegger's earlier philosophy, and poses the difference between Plato's and Aristotle's ontology, wherein "to be in the highest sense means to be always", and Heidegger's, for whom "to be in the highest sense means to exist, that is to say, to be in the manner in which man is: to be in the highest sense is constituted by mortality" (1995a, 304). This path of thought proved to be problematic, he notes, which eventually led Heidegger "to break with existentialism" (313). Strauss lists a number of crucial difficulties that induced Heidegger to take a different route, the first being the prevalent Protestant anthropological undertones of the Dasein analysis which are inconsistent with Heidegger's professed philosophical goals. As Strauss writes:

> "Heidegger demanded from philosophy that it should liberate itself completely from traditional or inherited notions which were mere survivals of former ways of thinking. He mentioned especially concepts that were of Christian theological origin. Yet his understanding of existence was obviously of Christian origin (conscience, guilt, being unto death, anguish)" (ibid).

Strauss also finally makes the distinction between historicism and historicity and employs it to explain the revision of Heidegger's early views. For the Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit* wishes to delineate the essential features of human existence "which as such would belong to the final time, to the fullness of time", yet Heidegger denies the possibility of this kind of ultimate perspective beyond the flow of historical time. "Existentialism claims to be the understanding of the historicity of man yet it does not

reflect about its own historicity, of its belonging to a specific situation of western man" (313-4), namely, the crisis of liberal democracy.

Strauss then turns to discuss Heidegger's fear of planetary technological domination and states that the only hope that remains is for a world society that is "genuinely united by a world religion" (ibid). Since Heidegger says no such thing, this appears to be a very 'loose' interpretation of Heidegger's notion of the advent of a new god, cast by Strauss's own worries over the question of technology and world politics in the time of the Cold War (Strauss 2000a; Howse, 2014). As a whole, the exposition of Heidegger in this lecture is overwhelmed by Strauss's concerns and results in a deeply 'Straussian' Heidegger. To combat this threat of technology, Strauss commentates, the tradition that brought about the present situation must be counteracted by exploring its limitations. Pithily, Heidegger's line of reasoning is said to be this: "technology is the fruit of rationalism and rationalism is the fruit of Greek philosophy". The Greek understanding of being as presence presupposes the intelligibility of the whole, which renders it at the disposal of "human mastery" (1995a, 317). Therefore, in order to bypass this conceptual heritage, the dogmatic assumption at the heart of rationalism, or better, metaphysics, that "to be means primarily to be present", must be dispose of. And over against the ontology of presence, an alternative understanding of being is offered, namely, "that to be means to be elusive or to be a mystery", an understanding attributed to "the east". Thus, salvaging the West from the threat of technology requires a philosophical encounter between the innermost roots of both worlds.

It is at this point where the importance of the initially omitted introductory statement regarding the significance of the lecture series for Jewish identity comes to light. In Strauss's interpretation of Heidegger, the way the West is to prepare itself for the meeting with the East is by examining its own roots and seeking a resembling, non-Greek conception of being as mystery *within itself*. According to Strauss, such an ontology can be found in the Bible. "Within the west", he determines, "the limitations of rationalism were always seen by the biblical tradition". Consulting with the Bible is particularly appropriate, for "biblical thought is one form of Eastern thought […] the Bible is the east within us, within western man" (ibid). To caution against misunderstandings, Strauss clarifies that he does not mean "taking the Bible as absolute" or as a set of beliefs or commandments – "Not the Bible as Bible", he assures, "but the Bible as eastern can help us in overcoming Greek rationalism" (ibid). It is unlikely

Strauss agrees with Heidegger's interpretation of the Greek account of reason, but it is clear that he reworks Heidegger's call to overcome Western metaphysics by engaging with the East as an appeal to take seriously a philosophical stance that resembles the one he finds in the biblical tradition. And note: The Bible takes the pre-Socratics' place in Heidegger's scheme as possessing a non-metaphysical conception of being to offset the ontology of presence. Strauss, in other words, likens Heidegger's conception of being to the 'eastern' biblical God, mysteriously described as "*Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*" (Exodus 3:14). This, however, is not an identification, for it is said that Heidegger's understanding of being is "as impersonal as the Platonic ideas and as elusive as the biblical God" (318).[90] With this, Strauss commits the common mistake of associating Heidegger's notion of being to some ultimate entity (which will be discussed in the next chapter on Heschel). The conclusion of Strauss's analysis, however, is this: the hope of the West lays in the contribution of a philosophically-construed biblical-Heideggerian understanding of being. It is this ontological conception that can constitute a limitation on the Greek dogmatism of reason and the accelerating technological domination it espouses and prepare the West for the fateful dialogue with the East.

Here too, the claims that the biblical position is "the east within us" and that it holds the possible key for rebooting the West's perverse conception of being are not Heidegger's positions.[91] Heidegger, as noted, situates Judaism and the 'Old Testament' alongside the Christian tradition, whose conceptions of the Creator God and *ens creatum* participate in the establishment of the grip of technological conceptions of being as produced. Rather, these claims are misrepresentations that conceal Heidegger's perspective just as much as they reveal Strauss's. Indeed, it is significant that Strauss's invocation of the Bible *excludes* Christianity, as his earlier portrayal of the overcoming of the Christian layers in Heidegger's existentialism makes clear. Unlike Heidegger, Strauss breaks the tie between Judaism and Christianity. In a passing remark he avers: "'the Judaeo-Christian tradition'? This means to blur and to

[90] On the mysterious and incomprehensible nature of the biblical God, see also: Strauss (1997, 359-76). The association of the Jewish tradition with the unrepresentable brings to mind Jean-Françios Lyotard's *Heidegger and "the jews"*. In Lyotard's formulation (1997), "the jews" are the reminder of the futility of the West's desire for complete representation, presencing, and control. In this sense – and perhaps in this sense only - Strauss and Lyotard are in agreement.

[91] This is highlighted by a comparison to other recounts of Heidegger's notion of an East-West dialogue by Strauss (1983, 33; 1995c, 330), where no mention of the Bible is made.

conceal grave differences" (307). This view is closely knitted to his earlier rejection of the quasi-universalistic liberal conception of religion that vouches for neutrality with regards to Judaism and Christianity only insofar as the former is modeled according to the latter. From the perspective of this essay, therefore, it can be said that the so-called 'turn' in Heidegger's thinking can be tentatively schematized as a move from a philosophy nested in the Christian tradition to one reflecting philosophical formulations approximating Jewish teachings. And it appears that it is in this respect that the perplexed Jew can find existential remedy in the direction proposed by Heidegger, whose productive conceptual framework reflects the philosophical significance of the insights found in the Jewish tradition for the contemporary predicament.

Yet this conclusion makes Strauss's lecture a puzzling piece. Not only is it a curious interpretation of Heidegger, it is also unclear how it should be reconciled with the aforementioned interpretation of the initiation of the East-West dialogue as pertaining to Strauss's liberal-arts Great Books project. Additionally, Strauss speaks approvingly of the wane of evocations of secularized Christian categories in Heidegger, but at the same time in their stead makes use of a non-dogmatic, secularized biblical category which in some way is supposed to be germane to modern Jewish identity. In so doing, it appears Strauss is committing the exact flaw he repeatedly rebukes in modern Jewish thought. Through his creative interpretation of Heidegger, Strauss reveals himself as a modern Jewish thinker also on another account, namely, in participating in the tradition common among modern German-Jewish thinkers that identifies modern existence as crises-laden and believes Judaism holds its salvific key. Strauss understands the crisis not, as is sometimes the case, in the lack of fulfilment of modern precepts, but rather in these very precepts themselves. Judaism, in his view, is not the epitome of modern sensibilities but rather counteracts them. In this respect he is unlike Cohen and perhaps more akin to Buber. Moreover, in his analysis of the biblical as Eastern, Strauss invokes a view that emerged toward the *fin-de-siècle* and gained popularity in the first decades of the twentieth century, according to which Judaism and the biblical world are not in essence Western, but rather rooted in the Orient. Many of those who held this view were driven by an anti-Semitic motivation to efface the place of Judaism from the story of the West. But for others - Buber, for example (Mendes-Flohr, 1991)– it served the opposite

goal. Fuelled with an increasing sense of the West's decadence and a fascination with non-Western cultures, they portrayed Judaism as exotic, irrational, and authentic, and thus as possessing the key for the revitalization of the modern European spirit, plagued by urbanization, rationalization, and alienation (Marchand, 1996; 2000; 2013). Strauss calls upon this constructed model, with its strong Romantic resonances, but in his questionable interpretation of Heidegger's notion of being as biblical-oriental, the Jewish-biblical worldview represents not irrationalism, but a rationalism aware of its limitations. In this respect Strauss's 'utopianism' is markedly 'anti-utopian' in that he posits the limitations of human abilities and rejects the premises that "every problem can be solved" (Strauss, 1997, 317). By promoting this apologetic mode of thinking, however, Strauss is once again revealed to be situated precisely within the modern Jewish tradition he so dedicatedly toiled to overcome.

Conclusion

In his thought, Strauss efforts to strengthen Jerusalem serve the purpose of reactivating the rivalry between philosophy and revelation in all its severity. In his understanding, while one is either from Athens or from Jerusalem, one must remain open to the option of the rival city's doctrine. Revelation, is the only worthy rival to philosophy and its ultimate borderline. As such must be taken seriously - in modernity more than ever. Strauss's occupation with political philosophy is thoroughly marked by his youthful Weimarian concerns about the shortcomings of liberalism's promises of modern emancipation, the question of modern critiques of religion, and the desire to secure the integrity of modern Judaism vis-à-vis its tradition. As we have seen, Heidegger hovers over Strauss's diagnosis of the modern crisis in philosophy and in Judaism, as well as the possibility of its recovery. Heidegger represents the height of modern nihilism, and therefore overcoming his philosophy and the tradition that made it possible is of paramount importance. At the same time, it is Heidegger who directs Strauss towards the possibility of reconsidering the neglected strife between Athens and Jerusalem as a way out of the modern impasse. As other thinkers discussed in this study, Strauss too understands Heidegger's philosophy of existence to be a secularized inheritor of the Christian tradition which, he believes, is part of the problem. Thus, his life-long encounter with Heidegger springs from, and is best understood as, part of the interwar effort of Jewish self-assertion in the face of Christianity and modern secularism. Heidegger also plays

a crucial role in Strauss's explorations into modern Judaism, reflecting its flaws and inauthenticity as well as offering a way to reconstruct a respectable Judaism. In this manner, Strauss too identifies an opposition between Heidegger and Judaism and poses a construction of the latter as a possible alternative to the former. In the next chapter, we examine how Abraham Joshua Heschel frames a similar opposition between what he takes to be Heidegger's pagan phenomenology and his own existential-biblical phenomenology.

Chapter 6: *God, Being, Pathos*: Abraham Joshua Heschel's Theological Rejoinder to Heidegger

Introduction

In May 1963, Abraham Joshua Heschel delivered the Raymond Fred West Memorial Lectures at Stanford University. The three lectures - 'In the Likeness and Unlikeness of God', 'In Search of Meaning' and 'Existence and Exaltation' – were later compiled in the book *Who is Man?*, published in 1965. In this condensed and mature expression of many steadfast positions, Heschel challenges modern secularism through presenting his phenomenological 'theology of man' in an implicit and explicit confrontation with Heidegger's existential ontology. In Heschel's formulation, Heidegger's philosophy "seeks to relate the human being to a transcendence called being as such" while his own thought, "realizing that human being is more than just being, that human being is living being, seeks to relate man to divine living, to a transcendence called the living God" (Heschel, 1965, 69). The aim of this chapter is to organize Heschel's otherwise unsystematic critique of Heidegger as a unified theological argument and critically assess it.[92]

Early Encounters with Phenomenology

Heschel studied philosophy in Berlin in the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s, in the very years of Heidegger's rise to philosophical stardom. From the very beginning, Heschel found phenomenology to be a constructive method of philosophical inquiry (Perlman, 1989; Rotenstreich, 1974; Novak, 2009). As attested in his doctoral dissertation *Das prophetische Bewusstsein* which he was then writing, Husserl's phenomenology provided him with a methodology to overcome the historicistic standards and aims of *Religionswissenschaft* and investigate the "actual singularity" [*eigentümlichen Besonderheit*] of the biblical prophetic consciousness; or as he describes it in the introduction to its 1962 expanded English edition, "the decisive categories or the structural forms of prophetic thinking" (1936, xvi; 1962, xi). By means of Husserlian phenomenology, Heschel treated

[92] Heschel's rejoinder to Heidegger has been recently discussed in Perlman (2016). However, further consideration seems to be required, as Perlman's analysis lacks almost any critical distance from Heschel, barely addresses Heschel's references to Heidegger outside of *Who is Man?*, and completely reduces Heidegger's philosophy to his politics. Finally, some of the Heschel's misrepresentations of Heidegger's philosophy are reiterated in Perlman's book. An earlier version of this chapter was published as Herskowitz (2018b).

biblical prophecy as an actual phenomenon not to be reduced to psychological states or historical background (Erlewine, 2016, 105-28).

However, Heschel never in fact adheres to the worldview that sustains Husserl's notion of 'transcendental ego'. Like many of his generational peers, he too rejects a detached a-historical rationalism in favour of an engaged, experiential, and situational perspective. From early on, Heschel attendes to the *Erlebnis* and *Ereignis* of human existence as explored by the 'new thinking', and thus is allied with some of the philosophical presuppositions that led Heidegger to rebel against Husserl.[93] In 1936 Heschel befriended Henry Corbin, the French Islamic expert who was among the first to translate Heidegger into French (Fenton, 2009). Their conversations and correspondence dealt with, among other things, Heidegger's thought and Corbin's progress with the translations (Kaplan and Dresner, 1998, 235, 258). Heschel is said to have "admired" Cassirer at the time, although it should be recalled that Cassirer had by then taken serious strides toward anthropological phenomenology (Martell, 2015), and it is unlikely that this admiration pertained to the vision of Judaism that Cassirer's shared with Hermann Cohen, a vision Heschel considered an artificial Hellenization of Judaism (ibid, 99).[94] Heschel's early work on the prophets constitutes an inaugural attempt, which will continue to occupy him throughout his entire life, to develop a 'biblical' thought that challenges the "German-Greek way of thinking" within which his professors and surrounding intellectuals *milieu* were entangled. It is in his early years in Berlin that he realizes: "there is much that philosophy could learn from Jewish life" (1954, 95).

After Heschel fled Nazi Germany to America, occasional references to Heideggerian ideas and vocabulary are discernible in his works. *Who is Man?* is his most comprehensive treatment of Heidegger and could be rightfully seen as the culmination of an ongoing albeit sporadic engagement with the German thinker. The relative scarcity of references to Heidegger before *Who is Man?* largely reflects the intellectual environment in America. In the 1940s and most of the 1950s, only a few works by Heidegger were available in English – *Sein und Zeit* not among them.[95] Heschel's *Who is Man?* both

[93] The marks of Dilthey and Scheler in *Das prophetische Bewusstsein* confirm this, as well has Heschel's early attraction to Buber's thought, among other things.
[94] On Cassirer and Heidegger, see chapter 2.
[95] On the reception of Heidegger in America, see Woessner (2011) - Woessner makes no mention of Heschel; Kaufmann (1969-70); Sheehan (2016). In *Who is Man?* Heschel quotes a translated passage from *Sein und Zeit*

reflects and should be read as an attempt to counter the theological surge of interest in Heidegger's philosophy that took place in the United States at the end of the 1950s and through the 1960s. Some notable indications of the 'Heidegger surge' include a conference at Drew University in April 1964, dedicated to the theological potential in Heidegger's thought, which drew public attention through a *New York Times* article reporting the controversial keynote address by Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology";[96] the publication of a book entitled *The Later Heidegger and Theology* (Robinson and Cobb Jr., eds., 1963), collecting various perspectives on the theological import of Heidegger's later philosophy; and the extensive popularity of Paul Tillich's existentialist theology, overtly influenced by Heidegger (Tillich, 1944; 1952; 1957; O'Meara, 1968).[97] As we shall see, some of the misrepresentations of Heidegger's thought typical of the time are apparent in Heschel's reading.

That *Who is Man?* reflects this theological fascination can be confirmed by a comparison of Heschel's published dissertation, entitled *Die Prophetie* (1936) with its expanded English version *The Prophets* (1962). After the section "Die ontologische Voraussetzung" in the original edition, the English edition has an added section entitled "The Ontocentric Predicament", parts of which appear *verbatim* in *Who is Man?* as a polemic against Heidegger. In this added section, a pagan experience, characterized as "experiencing being", is contrasted to the prophetic experience in which "experiencing concern" is the centre of existence (Heschel, 1936, 153-60; 1962, 260-7). This, indeed, offers a condensed encapsulation of the issue from Heschel's point of view: His engagement with Heidegger consists of a confrontation between the biblical perspective of the prophets and what he defines as Heidegger's paganism.

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as it is found in Langan (1959) which he evidently consulted. It is noteworthy that Heschel does not translate this passage on his own from German or use the English version of the now-canonical Macquarrie and Robinson translation which was published already in 1962. This suggests Heschel later encounter with Heidegger's thought is mainly second-handed and not in-depth. Heschel seems to be unfamiliar with William Richardson's monumental (1963) work as well.

[96] The conference was officially titled "A Second Consultation on Hermeneutics: Theological Discourse and the Proclamation of the Gospel". Montgomery (1964).

[97] On Heschel and Tillich, see Held (2013, 84-91, 262-4); Even-Chen (2009, 337-55). Heschel (1996, 408) explicitly rebukes the Tillichean notion of God as the 'Ground of Being'.

Heschel's Religious Existentialism

It is easy to confirm from Heschel's writings that his existential perspective concurs with many of Heidegger's philosophical assumptions. He effectively sides with Heidegger's notion of phenomenology over against Husserl's when he exercises a phenomenological "exegesis of human existence" in-the-world (Heschel, 1965, 41). Heschel is after the meaning of being, which he believes can be known only through temporal life. Indeed, temporality and historicity figure largely in his thought. In a chapter entitled 'The Temporality of Existence' in *Man is Not Alone*, he writes: "it is obvious that the relation of existence to time is more intimate and unique than its relation to space […] temporality, therefore, is an essential feature of existence" (1951, 200). The celebration of time is also extended in Heschel's work *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (1951). Like Heidegger, Heschel's existential positioning also prioritizes possibility over actuality - "the outstanding mark of man", he announces, "is the superiority of the possibilities of his being over the actuality of his being" (1965, 40).

Heschel, however, maintains that this overall outlook derives from, and is reflected in, the Hebrew Bible. For this reason, he rejects the prospects of an adequate phenomenology of human existence by means of Heidegger's a-theistic methodology. Springing from the conviction that God is essential to the very constitution of human being, Heschel perceives Heidegger's Dasein analytic to be misguided from the very outset. There is simply no sense in which the godless explication of Dasein's existence and the lack of any reference to Dasein's being-from or -toward God can refer to the actual human's being. In practice, Heidegger's a-theism is atheism. Heschel writes so in reference to Heidegger in a handwritten note kept in his private papers: "The issue is not being itself, for being itself is the invention of metaphysicians. Being in the world as expressing man's existence confines man and limits the problem. The true issue is *being with God*" (AJHP, 154/5).

In his theology, Heschel attempts to counter the demythologized modern perspective and re-establish the account in which the good is an actual, objective constituent of the nature of things due to their origin in a benevolent God. "After the Lord had created the universe", Heschel muses, "He took a look at His creation. What was the word that conveyed His expression? If an artist were to find a word

describing how the universe looked to God at the dawn of its existence, the word would be sublime or beautiful. But the word that the Bible has is *good*" (1955, 372). Being is good because God created it; it has an implicit normative value that is derived from its status as creation. Without this understanding, we cannot espouse normativity at all. "We may explore things without God", he states, but "we cannot decide about values without him" (377). A supernatural God and consequently a supernatural good are the condition of possibility of human existence.

Importantly, only the biblical God can be the source of good and therefore inhabit the path toward human fulfilment. As pathetic, that is, compassionate, caring, and animated by what Heschel terms 'transitive concern', the biblical God engages with the world, makes demands on humanity, and is in need of human partnership for redemption (Heschel, 1951, 143; 1955, 413; 1959, 23). Heschel's fundamental premises is therefore this: any framework that denies the essential link between humans and an ineffable but nevertheless personal, compassionate, and demanding God, viz., the biblical God of pathos, is ultimately nihilistic and tied to paganism. In Heschel's understanding, Heidegger's philosophy falls squarely into this category. Clearly, like Buber and others, Heschel approaches Heidegger from an ontic vantage point and in effect provides an ontic reading of Heidegger.[98] It is similarly apparent that Heidegger's lack of theological commitments is contested. Heidegger, in Heschel's view, advocates a religious perspective in contrast to which the Hebrew biblical tradition stands.

Being and Living

As noted, the fundamental assumption with which Heschel approaches Heidegger's thought is that "the problem of being can never be treated in isolation but only in relation to God" (1955, 412). As such, the account of authenticity outlined in *Sein und Zeit* is severely distorted. Heidegger describes Dasein's existence as groundless, and authenticity consists of heroically taking ownership of one's existence in the face of one's death. According to Heschel, however, the "existential paradox" of human life resides in the fact that "the self is in need of a meaning which it cannot furnish itself" (1965, 56). *Ens finitum*

[98] Goldstein (1978:166) calls Buber's ontic and anthropological reading of Heidegger a 'misunderstanding', and briefly comments that "a similar kind of misunderstanding occurs in the criticism of 'ontological thinking' found in a follower of Buber, Abraham Heschel".

is unable to provide the sufficient stability and substance for a meaningful, fulfilled life.[99] The implicit privation of human existence denies it the possibility of self-redemption. By ignoring the existential ground that God is, Heidegger substantiates a dangerous circularity by which the groundless Dasein, granted quasi-divine attributes, grounds its own being. This is a pagan ideal, Heschel asserts, whereby "man becomes his own idol" (36). A trace of Heschel's befuddlement by the self-circuiting features of Dasein's being can be found in another handwritten note in his personal papers, where he quotes from *Sein und Zeit*, "Dasein is *essentially guilty*", and then adds:

> "This means [Dasein] is not guilty some of the time, but all of the time. In everything man does, he is guilty, because he always has been guilty. This is a 'primordial being guilty', which lies in the fact that, though Dasein is 'thrown' and 'fallen' being, it is somehow responsible for its thrownness and fallenness" (AJHP 243/5).

Furthermore, the fact that human beings are created by God implies an inherent normative stamp on their existence. Values and normativity can be sustained only with recourse to God, and since such recourse is non-existent in *Sein und Zeit*, all that remains is neutral being, or being neutral. Decisions are made, actions are played out, but not in the name of a higher vocation or value: Dasein simply is. Heschel thus distinguishes between two accounts of existence: 'living' and 'being'. In a clear allusion to Heidegger, he states "the term 'human being' is apt to suggest that the human is but a mode of being in general, with the emphasis placed on being". In contrast to this view, he asserts that "man's most important problem is not being but living" (68); that is, not leading an ethically void existence but engaging in the constant challenge of a life directed towards the good. Heidegger's ontological existential of 'being-in-the-world', interpreted here as 'being-neutral-in-the-world', is converted in *Who is Man?* to the ontic and ethically-charged category of "living-in-the-world" (95), or "being-challenged-in-the-world' (105).

Of course, in Heidegger's descriptive and transcendental project of delineating the a-priori ontological preconditions of Dasein's existence in the world, few, if any, actual normative imperatives should to be found. *That* existential possibilities constitute Dasein's being is of dramatically greater interest to Heidegger than their *actual* ontic manifestations. Any encouragement or discouragement with respect

[99] Heschel (1973, 90-4) lists Kierkegaard and the Kotzker Rebbe as two religious thinkers who considered this delusional self-reliance as the greatest fault of the modern person.

to taking on one ontic possibility over another inherently undermines the declared descriptive aim. This does not mean Heidegger's philosophical scheme is not normative in a more general sense. What Heidegger attempts to do, however, is to expose and remove the presumed objective ground of the value systems so often taken for granted. Heidegger articulates what Dasein *could* be, but according to Heschel's ontic perspective, a genuine portrayal of human being must include both what one could *and* should be. "The central problem", Heschel affirms, "is not: 'What is it 'to be'?' but rather: 'How to be and not to be'?" (47). It may be helpful to clarify Heschel's assessment by considering another common critique of Heidegger's descriptive methodology. Levelled most famously by Jean-Paul Sartre, this critique calls attention to the inevitable prescriptive character of Heidegger's distinction between authentic and inauthentic being. It simply cannot be the case, so this charge goes, that this distinction can be made without an implicit prescriptive impetus towards authenticity. Whatever its merits and shortcomings, this critique allows us to see that according to Heschel, Heidegger's fault lay *not* in his failure to live up to the descriptive aims of his existential ontology, but in what is missing in his basic assumptions that brings rise to a misguided desire to adhere to descriptive aims in the first place.

Critique of Heidegger's lack of constructive moral obligation permeates *Who is Man?*. For instance, Heschel agrees with Heidegger that a key element of human existence is the fundamental distress of existential alienation and misplacement. Yet unlike Heidegger's authentic Dasein who opens itself up for *Angst*, in Heschel's account, the sense of homelessness translates into an embedded existential urge toward a relation with what is beyond. More specifically, existential anguish is generated less "by the mystery of being, by the absence of being, or by the fear of non-being", as he reads Heidegger to be asserting, but by the prospect of "meaningless being" (52). Anxiety does not spring from Dasein's general uncanniness or portending nothingness but from the troubling awareness of an unfulfilled ethical demand. Heschel's insinuated castigation of Heidegger's notion of 'boredom' draws on a similar view. In the lecture "What is Metaphysics?" Heidegger states that the existential mood of boredom is a portal into the truth of being, a gateway to awareness of the nothingness lurching behind being. For his part, Heidegger does not judge boredom positively or negatively, but rather seeks to uncover through it ontological insights. In Heschel's opinion, this reflects the absence of a compassionate God who instils

vocation and meaning in human existence. “Boredom is a sickness of the self-consciousness”, he writes, “the result of one’s inability to sense the vital vocation” in life (104). Our very existence is marked by vocation because ‘to be’ implies the normative demand ‘to live’. A related point can be detected in Heschel’s intimation to the notion of ‘mineness’ [*Jemeinigkeit*] in *Sein und Zeit*. Heidegger holds that Dasein understands its being as is in each case concretely ‘mine’. In an earlier work Heschel polemicizes against this position: “the essence of what I am”, he writes, “is not mine. *I am what is not mine*” (1959, 62). Heidegger comprehends man from within this fundamental self-referencing. Yet in truth, Heschel maintains, we belong to God, whose demands make ethical conduct the linchpin of authentic existence.

Demonstrating that he holds no meaningful distinction between Heidegger’s ‘early’ and ‘late’ writings, Heschel ties the lack of normativity in *Sein und Zeit*’s version of authenticity and the sheer being it promotes to Heidegger’s imperative to ‘let being be’. This is understood as a call for passivity, an expression of “despair” and mistrust in humanity. This grim view arises from a perverse account of human being, for “it is self-deception to assume that man can ever be an innocent spectator. To be human is to be involved” (1965, 68). In one of the two explicit mentions of Heidegger in *Who is Man?*, Heschel emphasizes that

> “Man is not only being, he is also living, and if he were simply to ‘surrender to being’, as Heidegger calls upon us to do, he would abdicate his power to decide and reduce his living to being. To be is both passive and intransitive. In living, man relates himself actively to the world” (94-5).

Heschel’s charge notwithstanding, the accusation that Heidegger holds a position advocating passivity is difficult to defend. As Heidegger makes clear in “The Question Concerning Technology” and other essays, ‘to let being be’ means not the absence of action but a certain receptive and attentive comportment towards being, one that does not aggressively seek to exploit or transform it. The act of thinking, which, according to Heidegger, lets being be, “is neither theoretical nor practical. It takes place before that differentiation” (GA 9, 362/ Heidegger, 1998, 263). To speak of ‘passivity’ in opposition to ‘activity’ as Heschel does is implicitly to participate in the discourse of effectivity and productivity that Heidegger seeks to circumvent. In other words, one who lets being be is indeed involved and is certainly not (at least necessarily) an “innocent spectator”.

Objectification and Nazism

A major corollary of Heidegger's advancement of 'being' over 'living', according to Heschel, is his inability to appropriately differentiate between human and thing. For without the fundamental ethical imperative in human being, Heidegger's system cannot account for the intrinsic quality and value of man. Heschel connects this fault to the way in which Heidegger carries out his phenomenology. "There are two ways of facing and inspecting human being", he observes: "from within or from without" (1965, 34). The former is when "I face my own being, here and now". The latter is when "I encounter my fellow man's being-there" - evoking the term Da-sein in English. It is important for Heschel to make a clear distinction between the two. While it is "possible and legitimate to ponder being in general or the being of all beings" as Heidegger does, it is nevertheless "futile and impossible to ponder human being in general, the being of human species" (34). Since the irreplaceably unique relation one has with oneself is missing in the reflection of other human beings, then "there is only one way of comprehending man's being-there, and that is by way of inspecting my own being". In taking the 'from without' perspective, Heidegger overlooks the elements of human existence that are attained by means of our self-relation. Any methodology that ignores this crucial feature is guilty of applying the method for investigating objects onto human beings and will therefore inevitably yield an objectivized and distorted portrayal of human existence. The title '*Who* is Man?' deliberately conveys this point: *who* applies to humans alone. In Heidegger's depiction, however, Dasein is objectivized: it is a *what,* not a *who*.

This is confirmed, in Heschel's view, by the portrayal of inauthentic Dasein as impersonal, generalized, dispensable, and plainly ordinary being. Against Heidegger's somewhat patronizing depiction of average everyday Dasein, Heschel argues that "my own being, placed as it is in the midst of many beings, is not simply being here, being around, being part of the environment. It is at the very center of my consciousness that I am distinct" (34-5). It should be noted that the phrasing "being here, being around, being part of" is an unmistakable nod to the plethora of terms used to describe Dasein's various ontological conditions in *Sein und Zeit*. But more importantly, what is implied here is that since the internal experience of other human beings is inaccessible to Heidegger, his only resort is to blunt generalizations that obscure uniqueness: "Generalization […] fails in trying to understand man" (37). Had he taken the 'from within' perspective, Heschel continues, he would have known that "it is through

the awareness that I am not only an everybody that I evolve as a self, as somebody, as a person, as something that cannot be repeated, something for which there is no duplicate, no substitute" (35). Admittedly, "in the eyes of the world […] I am an average man, but to my heart I am not an average person. To my heart I am of great moment" (ibid). According to Heschel, Heidegger's derogatory descriptions of everyday Dasein reflect a fundamental disdain towards human beings that is fastened to an even more fundamental disdain towards being: "it is as a result of extreme abuse and desecration of being that man brings upon himself the punishment of disgust with being". Echoing the assessment of Hans Jonas, who found parallels between Heidegger's existential philosophy and ancient Gnosticism and Buber's confirmation of the Gnostic charge of the notion of *Das Man*, Heschel judges that Heidegger suffers from a "disgust of being, a sense of being trapped in the world" (35-6). For Heschel, on the other hand, it is clear that "in the actual lives of actual men, life even when felt to be a burden is cherished deeply, valued supremely, accepted in its reality" (35).

Heidegger, however, holds a clear distinction between the being of things - either ready-to-hand [*zuhanden*] or present-at-hand [*vorhanden*] - and the being of Dasein. For him, Dasein is an entity like no other in that it lacks a fixed and determined essence: "if existence is definitive for Dasein's Being and if its essence is constituted in part by potentiality-for-Being, then, as long as Dasein exists it must in each case, as such potentiality, *not yet be* something" (SZ 233/BT 276). Unlike objects that are constituted by their facticity alone, Dasein is an open-ended being and as such its essence is determined by the unfolding of its life - hence the central role of death, the ultimate projection of this formative unfolding. The *how* of Dasein constitutes its being. Heidegger explicitly asserts that "the person is not a Thing, not a substance, not an object" (SZ 48/ BT 73). Heidegger in fact contrasts Dasein to all other entities that are constituted by their essence in language similar to that used by Heschel:

> "The being that we are ourselves, the Dasein, cannot at all be interrogated by the question *What* is this? We gain access to this being only if we ask: *Who* is it? Dasein is not constituted by whatness but – if we may coin the expression –by *whoness*. The answer does not give a thing but an I, you, we" (Heidegger, 1982:120).

Similarly, Heschel's 'within-without' critique seems to rest on the subject-object distinction so forcefully rejected by Heidegger and which he himself repudiates (Bondi, 2008, 6-54; Erlewine, 2012, 190n9). That Dasein is primordially always already outside itself, in-the-world, and with-others, that is,

always already attesting to and constituted by the existence of others, illustrates the inappropriateness of the rigid inside-outside axis upon which Heschel bases his criticism. Tellingly, not only does Heschel attribute to Heidegger a stance he fervently rejects, he also argues that this Heideggerian 'subject', as a 'what' and not a 'who', is not even worthy of the term. Moreover, given that Heidegger seeks a phenomenological and transcendental investigation of human existence and being, there is no escaping general and uniform preconditions. Indeed, that Heschel ventures to provide an apt description of modalities of human existence solely by means of self-inspection is incoherent if it is not grounded in the covert assumption that one's personal self-relational experiences can be generalized and applied to those of others.

The fault of generalizing human beings and treating them as 'average' is linked to Heidegger's notorious political affiliation. In Heschel's view, brutality - "the opposite of humanity" – is tied to "to the tendency to treat a person as a generality, to regard a person as an average man" (1965, 47). The accusation of Heidegger's philosophical objectification and contempt for human beings is also associated with Heidegger's Nazism. After quoting a passage written in pre-Nazi Germany describing the industrial resourcefulness of the human physique, Heschel suggests that "perhaps there was a connection between this statement and what the Nazis actually did in the extermination camps: make soap of human flesh" (24). The direct result of "moral annihilation" is "physical extermination".[100] Heidegger's imminence goes hand in hand with the pagan monstrosity of the Nazis: "existence without transcendence is a way of living where things become idols and idols become monsters" (86).

A similar reproach was made earlier by Heschel in his *Antwort an Einstein* (1940), a response to Albert Einstein's call in an address entitled *Science and Religion* (1940) to jettison the belief in a personal God

[100] It cannot go without mentioning that Heschel's mother and sister were both murdered by the Nazis. Maurice Freidman, a long-time friend of Heschel, shares a short anecdote (2011, 133): "Heschel confided in me that an American professor told him that while he was visiting Heidegger, the latter expressed regret that so many Jewish professors were able to emigrate to America. This can have only one meaning since the fate of German Jewish professors who stayed in Germany was extermination!". While it is doubtful whether "this can have only one meaning", this anecdote, assuming its credibility, does nevertheless convey something of Heschel's personal opinion of the German thinker. And yet also Harold Stern's counterpoint is worth noting (1983, 176-7): "as a Jew, a brand plucked from the fire, [Heschel] had the right to relate negatively to Martin Heidegger whose Nazis sympathies were well-attested […] Yet in *Who is Man?* Heschel shows a distinct respect for the author of *Being and Time*".

and embrace the 'religiosity' embedded in the cultivation of "the Good, the True, and the Beautiful" as found in rational knowledge and natural science (Kavka, 2006). Fulminating against this naturalist position, Heschel exhorts: "Hubris, the tragic sin of our time, is the conviction that there exists only laws of nature and technology, that man can accomplish everything by himself" (1940, 3/ 2003, 39-41). Einstein's immanent and self-contained framework denies a transcendent and relational God and is tantamount to the religiously and ethically distorted paganism. Heschel is even undeterred from linking Einstein – the pacifist - to the Nazis. The harsh response to Einstein and the critique of Heidegger stem from the same underlying conviction, namely, that "man reflects either the image of [God's] presence or that of a beast" (Heschel, 1943,1-2). Inasmuch as the world and humanity are perceived from within the 'immanent frame' there is nothing to prevent the reduction of human beings to objects readily exploited, abused, or exterminated in accordance with benefit or the whimsicality of will. Heschel thus reiterates the view we have encountered earlier, connecting Heidegger's Nazism to his immanentism. Yet here too, it is not explained why, in contradistinction to Heidegger, Einstein's immanentism led him *away* from Nazism.

In Heschel's understanding, the tragic unfolding of the twentieth century is the direct result of the paganism of modern secularism. And as Heidegger embodies this mode of thinking, the confrontation with his thought typifies the confrontation with the deficient spiritual underpinning of the age. Like the prophets, his biblical heroes of the past, and equipped with their message, Heschel feels obligated to confront and repudiate the modern manifestation of paganism he saw Heidegger's ontology to be (Magid, 2009, 151). Ultimately, this is a constructive task, one which does not only repudiate but also offers an alternative. Heschel seeks to recover the biblical tradition as a response to the present-day resurgence of paganism – manifested in the political sphere by Nazism and in the sphere of thought by Heidegger. Insinuating to both, Heschel announces: "Biblical religion is in a sense rebellion against the tyranny of things, a revolt against confinement in the world. Man is given the choice of being lost in the world or of being a partner in mastering and redeeming the world" (1965, 83).

It is not incidental that Heschel contrasts Heidegger with "biblical religion". No doubt, first and foremost, he has Judaism in mind, but it is similarly clear that he includes Christianity under this

category as well. Surely after the holocaust, he holds that Judaism and Christianity share a fate in the war against paganism. As he proclaims in his famous address "No Religion is an Island":

> "Nazism in its very root was a rebellion against the Bible, against the God of Abraham. Realizing that it was Christianity that implanted attachment to the God of Abraham and involvement with the Hebrew Bible in the hearts of Western man, Nazism resolved that it must both exterminate the Jews and eliminate Christianity, and bring about instead a revival of Teutonic paganism" (1996, 236).

This shared fate generates a shared task: Both Judaism and Christianity must "recognize our vocation to preserve and to teach the legacy of Hebrew scripture, accept our aid in fighting Marcionite trends as an act of love" (ibid, 242).[101] Significantly, Heschel situates Heidegger on the side of Athens, and both Judaism and Christianity on the side of Jerusalem -- only insofar, that is, as Christianity, "a wayward, rebellious" child of Judaism, preaches the Jewish message.

Living-Toward-Death

Generally, for Heschel, the preoccupation with death is the mark of paganism: "to the pagan eye the mystery of life is *Ruh'*, death, oblivion" (1996, 130; 1960, 128). This preoccupation can appear as an intense anxiety over death or as an excessive concern over the afterlife. The centrality of Dasein's being-toward-death in Heidegger's account of authenticity demonstrates this pagan disposition. The idea of living anxiously in light of a portended death is interpreted by Heschel as an expression of an unrealistic fantasy: "[I]s not the exaggerated anxiety about death due to presumption: the unspoken claim to go on living without dying?" (1965, 36).[102] In the essay *Death as Homecoming* (1969), a more detailed discussion of death peppered with critical references to Heidegger, Heschel also maintains that "anxiety about death is really an anxiety about the ultimate confrontation that follows death. In other words, it is an anxiety about the afterlife rather than dying itself" (1996, 366-78). Directing his reproach against Heidegger, the Jewish thinker states that "it is a distortion to characterize the life of man as moving toward death […] Death is the end of the road, but not its meaning, not a refutation of living. That every moment of life is a step toward death is a mechanical view" (375). To consider death as the final and

[101] As Erlewine (2016, 216n149) points out, the version published in *Moral Grandeur* mistakenly reads 'anti-Marcionite'.

[102] This misrepresentation of Heidegger could perhaps be traced to Langan's book (1959, 36), where it is stated that "the Dasein's ultimate possibility is death, i.e., the radical impossibility that a finite being should continue to exist forever".

ultimate end of human existence is to adhere to a secular-paganist view. “Death then is not simply man’s coming to an end. It is also entering a beginning” (367). Not the beginning of nothingness, but rather, inasmuch as human being is grounded in the divine, “the beginning of exaltation, an ultimate celebration, a reunion of the divine image with the divine source of being” (371). As opposed to ancient forms of paganism, Heschel confirms, “the Hebrew Bible calls for a concern for the problem of living rather than the problem of dying” (369).

The normative task instilled into human existence is signalled also in one’s relation to finitude. “The thought of death is a necessary component for human existence”, Heschel writes, for “it enables us to be open to ultimate demands regardless of personal needs” (376). Or, as he remarks in an unpublished handwritten note, “The fear of death is an apprehension of the debt we may have failed to pay. Death is a balance. Existence is not thrown ‘being-toward-its-end’” (AJHP, 239/4). Thus, “the real issue”, Heschel stresses, “is whether my existence here and now is exclusively being-in-the-world or whether it is also being-in-God’s-knowledge, whether being in the world is not also living in the presence of God” (1996, 372). In opposition to Heidegger’s perspective, when approached through the Jewish perspective, whereby life is a “gift” granted by God, “then death ceases to be a radical, absolute negation of what life stands for. For life and death are aspects of a greater mystery, the mystery of being” (366).

Heschel is clearly correct in pointing to the importance of death in Heidegger’s scheme, yet his representation of Heidegger’s position is deeply inadequate. In *Sein und Zeit*, resolute anticipatory anxiety in the face of death does not spring from the fear of the event of death or from the desire for eternal life. Nor, moreover, is it in any way an “absolute negation of what life stands for”. Heschel attributes to Heidegger the view that death is an event that occurs in some moment and that renders every moment a mechanical “step toward” it. This, however, is precisely the inauthentic account of death characterizing *das Man*, according to which the reaction to death is that of awaiting, not anticipation. In Heidegger’s account, death is the ultimate closure of the futural projection of Dasein’s *ex-tasis*, the marking of Dasein’s historicity. Being-towards-death is an ontological character of Dasein’s being-in-the-world, what designates its being-ahead-of-itself [*Sich-vorweg-sein*]. “The ending meant by death is not the being-at-an-end of Dasein”, which is the position Heschel attributes to

Heidegger, "but the being-towards-the-end of this being" (SZ 245/ BT 289). Heschel's perception of Heidegger's notion of death does not take into account the discussion on 'possibility' and the structure of 'care' in *Sein und Zeit*, without which the philosophical and existential force of 'death', as well as the difference between Dasein and a Cartesian 'subject', cannot be properly comprehended. Inasmuch as one's own death is not, to quote Wittgenstein, 'an event in life', and is thus always "the possibility of the pure and simple impossibility of Dasein" (SZ 250/ BT 294), then "death is a way to be, which Dasein takes over as soon as it is" (SZ 245/ BT 289); or as one commentator put it, "being-towards-death is essentially a matter of being-towards-life" (Mulhall, 2013, 123).[103]

Being and Pathos

As stated, Heschel characterizes Heidegger's scheme as one that "seeks to relate the human being to a transcendence called being as such", while his own biblical thought "seeks to relate man to divine living, to a transcendence called the living God" (1965, 69). Following a dominant and erroneous understanding of the time, expressed also in Jonas's "Heidegger and Theology" address (Scott, 1966; Richardson,1965), Heschel takes Heidegger's notion of being to be a proxy for God. This may explain the motivation behind the confrontation with Heidegger's ontology in the first place. In *God in Search of Man* Heschel announces that one of the tasks of philosophy of religion is "to refute the claim of philosophy when it presumes to become a substitute for religion" (1955, 11-2). A central problem with positing being as the ultimate, in Heschel's view, is its lack of pathos, that is, its lack of care and compassion towards humanity: "Man is in need of meaning, but if ultimate meaning is not in need of man, and he cannot relate himself to it, then ultimate meaning is meaningless to him" (1965, 73). This argument is identical to Heschel's recurring reproach of the 'philosopher's god', his paradigmatic specimen of a lifeless religious concept and the embodiment of the intrusion of Athens into the shrine of Jerusalem. "There is only one way to define Jewish religion", he insists, "it is the *awareness of God's interest in man*, the awareness of a *covenant*, of a responsibility that lies on Him as well as on us" (1951, 241). Heidegger's notion of being, on the other hand, is portrayed as a dead metaphysical

[103] For a simultaneously traditional and innovative application of the Heideggerian notion of being-toward-death in a Jewish context, see Herskowitz and Shalev (forthcoming). For a different approach regarding Heidegger's account of death and its ties to Jewish traditions, see Wolfson (2015a).

entity: distant, detached, and aloof. As such, it is necessarily incapable of furnishing significant religious and existential meaning. In a comparable manner to Buber (and Levinas, as we shall see), Heschel opposes the anonymity of Heidegger's being,and instead posits the personal and pathetic God of the Hebrew Bible.

Heschel contends, moreover, that positing being as the ultimate espouses nihilism. In continuation to his earlier argument against the lack of normative value in Heidegger's account, he declares against Heidegger's ontological fixation and the apathetic nature of being: "the ultimate problem is not being, but the concern for being. What precedes being is not nothingness, but rather concern for beings; logos as well as *pathos*" (1965, 92). Heschel is alluding again to "What is Metaphysics?", where Heidegger speaks of the dependency and commingledness of being with Nothing. The religious ramifications of conferring ultimacy on that which is entangled with nothingness, Heschel claims, are dire: "If the ultimate is sheer being, the human living has nothing to relate himself to as living. He can only relate himself to nothing" (69). In contrast to the nihilism of an ontology entwined with nothingness, Heschel's theology of pathos is focused on God's transitive concern. "There is a care that hovers over beings", he writes. "Being is surpassed by concern for being. Being would cease to be were it not for God's care for Being" (92). Overall, Heschel laments, Heidegger suffers from 'the ontocentric predicament', i.e. the prioritization of ontology over anthropology, by which Heschel means not an anthropocentric worldview but rather one that focuses on a God whose pathos towards humans grants value and meaning to their lives (Heschel, 1962, 263-7; Held, 2013, 77).

Here the discrepancy between Heidegger's non-humanist ontology and Heschel's humanist existentialism is thrown into sharp relief. For the German philosopher's ontological project endeavors to delineate the existential structures of Dasein's being in order to better come to grips with the *Seinsfrage,* not in order to answer the anthropological question 'Who is man?'. Heschel attributes Heidegger's ontological quest to a Greek mode of thinking which is marked by abstractions and confined to the realm of thought. The Greeks ask "what is being?", while the biblical mind thinks concretely and ethically and asks "what is required of me?" (1965, 107). For the biblical man, "Being is not *all*" (71). Heschel claims that Heidegger's ontocentric predicament grants that Dasein's value

depends on and corresponds to the manner in which it contributes to the inquiry into being - which means it is derivative, diminished, and ultimately hinged on nothingness. Insofar as being is inherently valueless, the integrity and meaning of human beings cannot be derived from it. As he states, "[human] existence does not receive its meaning from the realm of being" (67). Heidegger's tie between Dasein and *Sein* circumvents the constitutive place of God in human existence and once again bespeaks pagan tendencies.

As noted, Heschel's treatment of Heidegger's notion of being is deeply flawed and reveals a misunderstanding at the heart of his critique. The ontology ascribed to Heidegger is precisely the one he dedicated extended philosophical efforts to overcome, or at least 'get over'. In Heschel's presentation, being is an 'ultimate', something Dasein is in need of, an 'object' that Dasein strives for but that cannot grant affection in return. However, the rendition of being as substantive ignores Heidegger's fundamental point regarding the ontological difference between being and beings, or the related point that being [*Sein*] is always and only manifested in beings [*Seiendes*]. This point is best explained by Derrida in his early response to Levinas (1997, 136): "Being, since it is *nothing* outside the existent […] could in no way *precede* the existent, whether in time, or in dignity, etc. […] being is but the *being of* the existent, and does not exist outside it as a foreign power, or as a hostile or neutral impersonal element". Heidegger is regarded by Heschel as a traditional ontologist, adhering to 'the metaphysics of presence' against which he contests. For Heidegger, however, "the essence of being is such that, as a self-revealing, being reveals itself in a way such that a self-concealing – that means, a withdrawal – belongs to this revealing" (GA 10, 121/ Heidegger, 2010a, 25). Heidegger sometimes employs the ancient form of 'Byng' [*Seyn*] instead of being [*Sein*] in order to disassociate it from precisely Heschel's misconception. Being is not a Platonic form or Aristotle's unmoved mover, but rather contingent, finite, historical, and always elusive. It does not act nor is it acted upon; it is disclosure as such. "Being is both the most empty and the most full".

Moreover, the identification of being and God is explicitly denied by Heidegger, who proclaimed, as mentioned in chapter 1, "God and being are not identical, and I would never attempt to think the essence of God via being". Heidegger's own assault on the Aristotelian god and what he terms 'ontotheology'

makes clear why Heschel's rendering of Heidegger's notion of being as an unmoved mover is so misguided. In his oft-quoted words: "man can neither pray nor sacrifice to this God. Before the *causa sui*, man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor can he play music and dance before God" (1969b, 72). While appropriately a philosophical critique, Heidegger was well aware that his critique of the *causa sui* God can amount to a theological critique as well, indeed, one mirroring Heschel's own protest against the philosopher's god (Held, 2013, 50). Relatedly, Heschel's implication that in Heidegger's scheme Dasein's value is diminished because it is derived from being is based on the errant assumption that being is a thing from which value can be derived. Heidegger considers the connection between being and value to be the hallmark of western metaphysics, from the time of Plato and until Nietzsche, its last victim. It should be added that Heschel's understanding of Nothing in Heidegger as an absence or negation of something stands in direct opposition to Heidegger's statement that "the nothing [*das Nicht*] is more original than the 'not' and negation" (1998, 97). Such a rendering misses the sense of Nothing as the force, so to speak, that draws being out to the openness of its disclosure, or, as Heidegger explains in his 1943 postscript to "What is Metaphysics", as a word for being itself.

Being as Creation

Seemingly nowhere is the variance between Heschel's religious existentialism and Heidegger's a-theistic methodology better attested than in their diverging responses to Leibniz's famous question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?". Both thinkers situate the fundamental wonder from the very fact of being in the centre of their thought. According to Heidegger, attending to the mystery of being is the zenith of thinking and the limit of phenomenology. In Heschel's view, being generates radical amazement and invites questioning, and although evasive, it steers the inquirer toward a further investigation after its origin. Against the Heideggerian position, Heschel stresses that "the mind dares to go beyond being in asking about the source of being […] a Being that calls a reality into being is endowed with the kind of being that transcends mysteriously all conceivable being". Heschel would have probably agreed with Eric Voegelin's point that, in Leibnitz's thought, the aforementioned question is coupled with an additional vital question - "why is something as it is, and not different? - a question which, Voegelin observes, Heidegger neglects to address (Voegelin, 1990, 43-4). Voegelin's

point is not a complaint about a disloyal reading of Leibnitz; rather, it is directed at Heidegger's hidden theological presuppositions that hold him back from inquiring further beyond the being of beings. Heschel concurs: accepting that "the Supreme Being is total mystery" and subsequently rejecting that "there is meaning beyond the mystery" (1965, 77) is a manifestation of "pagan heritage" (1955, 126). The mystery of being cannot be the final point of investigation, for both being and nothing are "transcended". It is for this reason that Heschel contends that Heidegger's immanentism suffers from a logical fallacy - "the acceptance of the ultimacy of being is a *petitio principii*; it mistakes the problem for the solution" (1965, 70). The intrigue of the question of being points beyond itself, to the condition of being, to the question of the *coming into being* of being: "Being points to the question of how being is possible", Heschel remarks. "The act of bringing being into being, creation, stands higher in the ladder of problems than being" (71). In a clear reference to Heidegger, he asserts: "Being is a mystery, being is concealment, but there is meaning beyond the mystery" (77). Being is not the ultimate, as Heidegger allegedly holds, but rather the result of the concern of God, the creator and Lord of Being.

As Heschel points out, understanding being as creation has ethical ramifications: "Philosophically the primacy of creation over being means that the 'ought' precedes the 'is'" (97). This view resembles the general thrust of Levinas's critique of Heidegger, as we shall see.[104] For Heschel, the immanentist worldview lacks this inherent ethical imperative towards being. As such, it generates an increasing disposition of exploitation, manipulation, and objectification toward the world. Heschel bemoans that "our age is one in which usefulness is thought to be the chief merit of nature […] Man has […] become primarily a tool-making animal, and the world is now a gigantic tool box for the satisfaction of his needs" (1955, 98). There are clearly some resemblances between Heschel's concern and Heidegger's thoughts about the modern enframing and the essence of technology (Held, 2013, 46-52). For both the technological disposition of manipulation betrays a woeful disassociation with the holiness of being

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[104] Consider also the following Levinasean outburst: "a human being is not only a body but also a face. A face cannot be grafted or interchangeable. A face is a message, a face speaks, often unbeknown to the person. Is not the human face a living mixture of mystery and meaning? […] the most exposed part of the body, the best known, it is the least describable, a synonym for an incarnation of uniqueness. Can we look at a face as if it were a commonplace?" (1965, 38). See also Wolfson (2014, 106-12).

that ought to be surmounted. Of course, Heschel would reject such a comparison. From his perspective, care for the world stems from its status as creation. The pagan worldview championed by Heidegger cannot promote an attentive and delicate comportment towards the world since it cannot distil real value into the world. His pagan 'disavowal of transcendence' turns nature into "a utensil, an object to be used. The world ceases to be that which is and becomes that which is available" (1965, 83). Heidegger's seeks to prepare for a receptivity to the imminent radiance, transcendence, and mystery of the overflowing richness of being - that is, the *opposite* of manipulation. For Heschel, this is paganism; transcendence must arrive from without and is manifested and implemented within. Thus, while ostensibly holding comparative outlooks, from Heschel's perspective, Heidegger's stance is the problem, not the solution.

The view of being as creation allows Heschel to offer a theological corrective to Heidegger's notion of thrownness. By thrownness Heidegger points to the basic ontological feature that much in our life is not determined or controlled by us, that our very being is always conditioned by the world outside ourselves, that Dasein is born into its finite facticity. Heschel, like other theologians at the time, understands this notion as a description of arbitrary existence bereft of any overarching intention or plan, the abandonment of man by God. He therefore exclaims: "[God] has not thrown us out into the world and abandoned us" (1951, 269). Heschel quotes – without reference - (Thomas Langan's translation of) *Sein und Zeit* §53, where it is stated that through the idea of death Dasein "discovers himself confronted by Nothingness, the possible impossibility of his existence". He then paraphrases Heidegger's depiction of Dasein as an extended existence from its thrown birth to its extinction in death by alluding to Genesis 3:19: "Man may see himself between 'thrownness' at one end and death at the other and so maintain: Out of Nothingness I came and into Nothingness I shall return" (1965, 69-70).[105] In the second explicit reference to Heidegger in the book, Heschel declares, "Heidegger's rhetorical question, 'Has the Dasein, as such, ever freely decided and will it ever be able to decide as to whether to come into existence or not?' has been answered long ago: 'It is against your will that you are born, it

[105] This too can be traced back to Langan's book (1959, 36), where the discussion of this issue is formulated in a way that for a biblically-inclined reader such as Heschel would automatically bring these verses from Genesis to mind. Langan writes: "'Throwness' at one end and death at the other – these are the signs that Dasein draws its reality from Nothing and is destined to return it to the same indefinite night".

is against your will that you live, and it is against your will that you are bound to give account…'" (97). The quote from Mishna *Avot* 4:22 ostensibly reiterates the idea that Dasein is thrown into a world with little control over the most momentous events of life. But inasmuch as being is creation, the implied idea of a caring creator indicates concern and intention behind one's thrownness. Offering his alternative, Heschel trumpets,

> "I have not brought my being into being. Nor was I thrown into being. My being is obeying the saying 'Let there be! […] against the conception of the world as something just here, the Bible insists that the world is creation. Over all being stand the words: Let there be! And there was, and there is. To be is to obey the commandment of creation" (97).

It is noteworthy that the issue of being as creation is addressed by Heidegger in the 1935 lecture series "Introduction to Metaphysics". There he proclaims that the belief in the Bible as divine revelation denies the possibility of a genuine *philosophical* inquiry into the fundamental ontological question - 'Why is there Being rather than nothing?'. Alluding to 1 Corinthians 1:20, Heidegger states that it would be foolish to re-raise the question from within a religious framework, for doing so genuinely would necessitate "giving oneself up as a believer". The postulation of creation as extended in the Bible solves, he believes, the ontological question without actually attending to its horizons of obscurity, and as such perpetuates the negligence of being. From Heidegger's phenomenological perspective, Dasein's role as the 'open' in which beings are disclosed means that the question regarding the 'beginning' of being must involve Dasein's role in its unconcealment. It is for this reason he is after the origin of the understandings of being but has little interest in the question of the origin of being as raised by theology. As he contends,

> "History begins only when beings themselves are expressly drawn up into their unconcealemnt and conserved in it, only when this conservation is conceived on the basis of questioning regarding being as such. The primordial disclosure of beings as a whole, the question concerning beings as such, and the beginning of Western history are the same" (1998, 145).

Conclusion

Heschel seeks to expose the religious and ethical deficiencies in Heidegger's work and to challenge it by placing his biblical theology as a contesting alternative, one that is not only more religiously attuned but also essential to human flourishing and promoting the good. The main problem with the German philosopher's ontology, in his view, is that it brackets the living God of the Bible outside its purview.

As such, it is unable to be receptive to the holiness and value existing in the world and in every human being, and also unable to account for the religious and moral obligation this demands. Heschel would no doubt agree with Heidegger's oft-quoted statement that "only a god could save us", but he would similarly insist that any Heideggerian god has nothing to do with God and is in fact an idol. Heidegger's philosophy is not neutral but straightforwardly pagan; it is the re-emergence of the paganism of biblical times, against which the prophets pronounces their ever-reverberating message. In the next chapter, we turn to Emmanuel Levinas, who similarly likened Heideggerian ontology to paganism, and developed in its wake a radical ethics focused on the Other.

Chapter 7: Uprooting Paganism: Emmanuel Levinas Faces Heidegger

Introduction

Emmanuel Levinas is arguably the most famous Jewish student of Martin Heidegger (alongside, perhaps, Hannah Arendt). Levinas's philosophical effort could be summarized, somewhat succinctly, as the attempt to put to the fore the idea of 'ethics as first philosophy'. Levinas sought to dethrone what he takes to be philosophy's prioritization of ontology and establish that undergirding ontology is infinite and asymmetrical responsibility for the other person. Often Levinas speaks of the ethical encounter as a relation to the Other's [*Autrui*] face, an 'infinite', overabundant excess conditioning the finite; a relation beyond the horizon of being, through which the trace of the divine Other shines through. The revelation of the face does not manifest itself as, nor is it mediated through, concepts or representations, but rather as the demand and command of ethics. I am obligated to the other person before comprehension. Intersubjectivity is not a contingent on the self, but precedes and conditions it. The insight of 'ethics as first philosophy' is expressed with typical hyperbole: my responsibility to the Other includes a responsibility for the Other's responsibility, even for my oppressor and prosecutor; I am demanded to substitute for the Other, to death. Throughout the course of Western thought, Levinas claims, otherness has always been reduced to sameness, the unfamiliar quickly devoured by thematization and rendered familiar. Hence alterity - of the other person, of God - is consistently denied. Levinas's self-ascribed task, then, is to phenomenologically depict the ethical moment which exceeds phenomenality, and argue for its originary status with regards to ontology.

According to Levinas's own testimony, his philosophical project is a "translation" of the 'Hebrew' message of the primacy of the ethical into 'Greek'. Figuratively, he expresses this idea with the statement: "the Septuagint is incomplete" (Levinas, 1994a, 75). His work presents itself as an attempt to convey Jewish wisdom in the language of philosophy, with the aim of reanimating the West by exerting from it the unethical impulses dominating its traditional ontology. These unethical impulses, Levinas claims, reach their full and alarming expression in Heidegger. For him, Heidegger's exclusion of ethics from ontology, his admiration for the Greeks, and his anti-Jewish sentiments are all dimensions

of a single configuration of thought in contrast to which Judaism and its ethical core stand. While the seemingly innocent metaphor of 'translation' is misleading, for reasons that will be fleshed out below, in this chapter I demonstrate that in his early essays, from the mid-1930s and the 1940s, Levinas mimics Heidegger's methodology by developing a secularized phenomenology of Jewish existence as an *alternative* to Heidegger's secularized Christianity, which is deemed paganism. This Jewish phenomenological alternative to paganism, I argue, is the foundation of his later opposition between 'ethics' and 'ontology' and remains reverberating in it. Indeed, Levinas presents a philosophical alternative to Heidegger in which his account of Judaism is inscribed. This account, however, is also profoundly marked by Heidegger's philosophical achievements, thereby problematizing any simplistic framings of confrontation between the Jewish and German philosophers.[106] The working assumption of the present chapter is that it is a mistake to read Levinas's philosophical works in isolation from his Jewish writings. Despite his occasional argument to the contrary, a schematic distinction between the two is indefensible. The writings on Jewish topics are not peripheral to Levinas's intellectual project and must be read alongside his philosophical works and with equal seriousness. Indeed, the full scope of his philosophical rejoinder to Heidegger is missed if his Jewish writings are not taken into account.

While Levinas lived most of his mature life in France, wrote in its language, and is hailed as one of its most renowned thinkers, the case for dealing with him in the context of the present study is not difficult to make. For not only did Levinas serve as a major conduit of German thought to France, alongside luminaries like Jean Wahl and Sartre (Kleinberg, 2005; Janicaud, 2015), but as we shall soon see, the time he spent in Germany in the early stages of his philosophical development was formative and thoroughly determined the trajectory of his thinking. An early advocate of phenomenology, Levinas was deeply impressed by the German interwar intellectual sensitivities and vocabulary, with its anxieties over issues of ontology, theology, radical otherness and intersubjectivity, and drew significantly on it. In this respect, while Lithuanian by birth and French by adoption, the inception of Levinas's philosophy as well as its core concerns and insights are marked by the powerful innovations

[106] Manning's observation (1993:17) that "Levinas quite clearly situates himself beside Heidegger and it is *there* that he grows uncomfortable" has telling consequences on the formation of Levinas's thoughts on Judaism, a point often marginalized.

of the interwar German discourse (Moyn, 2006b; 2004). As we shall similarly see, his response to Heidegger corresponds with typical features of the Jewish encounter with the German thinkers in that period.

Levinas and Heidegger: Early Encounters

The difficulty in coming to terms with Levinas's critique of and rejoinder to Heidegger rests in part in the fact that it is based on a profound debt to Heidegger, one which often finds Levinas closer to his teacher than he is willing to admit.[107] To appreciate this intricate relation, it is best to begin at the beginning. From the very outset, Levinas was captivated by the phenomenological method. As a student, he spent two semesters in 1928-1929 in Freiburg, where he attended lectures by Heidegger and Husserl. While he recognized the latter's greatness, Levinas was quickly impressed by the philosophical rebellion Heidegger wrought against his mentor in *Sein und Zeit*. Already in his dissertation on Husserl's phenomenology, the analytical method with which Levinas approaches Husserl is Heideggerian (Levinas, 1973). Approving of Heidegger's rebuke of Husserl's notions of pure consciousness, intentionality, and transcendental ego for suffering from an overdose of theoretical intellectualism and abstraction, Levinas rhetorically inquires: "Is our main attitude toward reality that of theoretical contemplation? Is not the world presented in its very being as a centre of action, as a field of activity or of care – to speak the language of Martin Heidegger?" (ibid, 119). Husserl continues to be an important philosophical resource for Levinas, but the conviction that the Heideggerian path is superior is never repealed (Levinas, 1998a).

Levinas's appreciation of Heidegger's work began in his early student years and persisted throughout his entire life. In fact, it is rare to witness one philosopher speak of the work of another philosopher with such adoration. No superlatives are held back: *Sein und Zeit* is praised as a "miracle" (Robbins, 2001, 140), "a peak of phenomenology", "brilliant," (Levinas, 1985, 116) "one of the finest books in the history of philosophy" (ibid, 37), "the great event of our century" (42), and a personal "shock" (Kearney, 1984, 51). Levinas consistently speaks of his "admiration" to Heidegger (1985, 38), "the greatest philosopher of the century, perhaps one of the very great philosophers of the millennium" (116),

[107] Critchley (2009, 45) terms this Levinas's "somewhat Oedipal conflict with Heidegger". More on this below.

a "genius" (2007, 209), who is even once called "Germany's glory" (1998a, 38). Heidegger's phenomenological method is said to be "more than a new theory: it is a new idea for life, a new page in history, almost a new religion" (ibid, 37). It is thus of little surprise that we find this appreciation expressed in Levinas's first piece on Heidegger, "Martin Heidegger and Ontology" (1932), which aimed at introducing Heidegger's philosophical novelties to the French intelligentsia and expressed little if any reservations toward Heidegger's ontological project.[108]

Levinas's initial veneration was severely marred by Heidegger's decision to join Hitler, yet he continually, if painfully, expresses his admiration also after 1933.[109] That Levinas perceived Heidegger's political views to be directly related to the latter's philosophy manifested for him an acute philosophical flaw at its heart. His early essays strive to address the broader import of this flaw and begin to sketch out an alternative from *within* the philosophical horizons outlined by Heidegger. Levinas's *oeuvre* as a whole is markedly governed by Heidegger's itinerary, concerns, terminology, and method; the Levinasian problematic is only intelligible from within the groundwork staked out by Heidegger. His discomfort, critique, and effort to pose an alternative to it presupposes a profound acceptance of some of its fundamental features. Later, in a programmatic response to his interviewer's question whether it is correct to say that he "went through Heidegger, beyond Heidegger, by means of Heidegger", Levinas admits: "always with pain and suffering. But I cannot deny it. Mont Blanc is Mont Blanc" (Robbins, 2001, 154; Levinas, 1978, 19).

The Earliest Levinas: Being-Pagan, Being- Jewish

The beginning of Levinas's effort to formulate a rejoinder to Heidegger coincides with a personal rekindling of interest in Judaism. While never completely abandoning it, the occupation with the tradition of his youth dwindled throughout his student years, only to forcefully remerge in the 1930s (Robbins, 2001, 37).[110] This biographical point is significant because in this initial stage of his

[108] This early essay was an excerpt of a larger book Levinas intended to write on Heidegger between 1930 and 1932, but the project was aborted in wake of Heidegger's political siding. A less revered version of this early piece was reprinted after the war (Levinas, 1996a).

[109] Indeed, the majority of the cited adulations are expressed after 1933, and even after the holocaust.

[110] Returning to France in the beginning of the 1930s, Levinas joined the Alliance Israélite Universelle, the Jewish organization he was to remain strongly associated with for fifty years. While writing innovative works of

intellectual maturation, Levinas cultivates a philosophical conceptualization of Judaism in response to Heidegger. His recovery of Judaism can be explained by the historical circumstances of the rise of Hitler and the imperative forced upon Jews to take hold of their Jewish facticity. It can perhaps also be explained by the fact that Levinas understands Heidegger's ontological project itself to be theologically-charged. "In 1928-29, as I read him for the first time", he recalls, "it sounded, resounded, *theological* as well. You know, 'guilt'. It looked as if it were a secularization of theology. Do you know the saying from Max Scheler, 'it is a mixture of genius and Sunday school preaching'?, that was the echo" (ibid, 141). Like so many of Heidegger's early readers, Levinas too identified in *Sein und Zeit* a constitutive Christian mark. For him, as for others, the Christian categories stripped of their theistic content and ontologically formulized are not a-theological, as Heidegger conferred, but rather amount to 'paganism'. This term would quickly become a 'code word' for the general worldview Levinas took Heidegger to be advancing.

In a handful of essays throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Levinas stakes out phenomenologically two ways of inhabiting the world: the first, a sense of rootedness in an impenetrable totality; the second, a sense of uprootedness and estrangement in a totality punctured by exteriority. The former is dubbed a pagan being-in-the-world and associated with the radically hermetical immanent world of Heidegger. The latter is proposed as an alternative existential modality of being-in-the world, 'being-Jewish'. In Levinas's understanding, these alternatives bear political, ontological, ethical and religious ramifications, all of which are developed throughout his intellectual corpus. Indeed, perhaps the cardinal assumption driving Levinas's writings is that 'mere' or 'pure' being, that is, the pagan's world, is the site of evil, power, and idolatry. Moral justification, peace, and true religiosity are accessible only in being touched by transcendence. As he writes in *On Escape* (1935), "every civilization that accepts being - the tragic despair it contains and the crimes it justifies - merits the name 'barbarian'" (Levinas, 2003, 73). This assumption is latent in many of the writings of the young Levinas, fleshed out more

philosophy, Levinas's main occupation for decades was his role as the director of one of the Alliance's Jewish day schools.

explicitly in his discussion of *il y a* in the 1947 *Existence and Existents*,[111] and lies at the very heart of the ethical philosophy he develops in numerous later texts.

In one of his earliest essays, "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism" from 1934, Levinas begins to draw out the conceptual ties between political totalitarianism and a totalizing ontology that he will immediately term paganism. The political phenomena of Hitler, he claims, is rooted in a set of ideas that are made possible by long-standing yet impoverished liberal understandings of time, freedom, the will, and the body. Established on the acceptance of the inescapable bondage to the body, the temporality of "fatedness", and the immanent order, the philosophy of Hitlerism gives itself to racism, the will for power, and the aggressive desire for universal expansion that now threatens the Judeo-Christian legacy of western humanism. Heidegger's name is absent from this essay, but the conceptual link between Heideggerian ontology and 'the philosophy of Hitlerism' is easily established. In a later edition Levinas openly confirms that the essay was written to address the dangers he identified in the conception of being advanced by Heidegger, namely, being completely concerned with itself, wherein the possibility of its breaching from without is denied (Levinas, 1990a; Hammerschlag, 2010, 124-5). It is hardly surprising that Levinas approaches the political and philosophical challenges of Hitlerism from his perspective as a Jew. For him, Hitlerism confronts Judaism with the greatest trial it has ever faced, while also provoking it to reassert its essence and proclaim its message to the nations (Levinas, 1935, 4). An early expression of what Levinas understands by this is found in a 1935 text entitled "The Contemporary Relevance of Maimonides" (Levinas, 2008). This short article is an exposition of how the 'Great Eagle' bears on "current concerns", above all, on the "paganism" that has re-emerged in Europe. Levinas claims that Maimonides can serve as a guide for the perplexed of the day; in the present dire situation, the perplexed are not those who are caught between the apparent contradictory truths of scripture and science, but those who are tempted by the appeals of the re-emergence of this "arrogant barbarism" (ibid, 91). Since the philosophical and political perversion of Hitlerism is bound to a certain comportment towards being, Maimonides' contribution to the current predicament can be teased out

[111] The original French title, *De l'Existence à l'Existent*, which translates to *From Existence to Existents*, better captures the dependence on and reversal of Heidegger's scheme.

ontologically from the way he deals with the plunder of 'creation'. This vital religious notion was deemed philosophically obsolete from the then-reigning Aristotelian perspective and its commitment to the eternity of the world and divine perfection. But as Levinas explains, in the discussion of the topic in a series of chapters in book II of *The Guide*, Maimonides argues that applying the laws by which the world is governed, as outlined by Aristotle, to creation, is utterly erroneous. There is an "abyss separating creation from manufacturing" (92), and it is the conceptual distinction between "notions borrowed from the world" and "that which is beyond the world" undergirding this abyss that holds the key to Maimonides's contemporary relevance. For, as Levinas states, "the clarity of this distinction between the thought that thinks the world and the thought that surpasses it comprises the definitive victory of Judaism over paganism" (94). He then offers his definition of paganism as "a radical incapacity to break out of the world. It does not amount to denying spirits and gods but in situating them within the world" (ibid). The refusal to accept a world-picture of imprisonment in being and the ability to acknowledge an 'otherwise' that surpasses it is the meaning of 'creation' and Judaism's contribution and "*raison d'être*".

An analogy thus surfaces between Aristotelian and Heideggerian paganism on the one side, and the Maimonidean and Levinasian Jewish challenges to this paganism, one the other side. The formers accept being as an impenetrable and incontestable totality, while the latters confirm the world *as well as* a radical externality that disturbs and disputes its purported totality. This analogy reveals a fundamental point about Levinas's relation to Heidegger as a whole: Just as Maimonides's contesting position is predicated on a general acceptance of the Aristotelian worldview, so too Levinas's position remains predicated on the very ontological view it seeks to subvert. Insofar as Levinas's effort to overcome the pagan confinement to being is analogous to his attempt to supersede Heideggerian philosophy, in both cases the task involves a dialectic that includes negation and conservation of basic elements of the displaced framework.

Since Levinas's main concern at this point is ontological phenomenology, countering Heidegger's conception of being with the notion of 'creation' is not a speculative theological rejoinder, but rather a formulation of a distinctive way of experiencing being. According to Levinas, the pagan's refusal of

transcendence generates a mode of being-in-the-world betraying confidence and a sense of sufficiency with being, which brings about a fundamental experience of stability and rootedness. Dasein's being, in Levinas's oppositional reading, is not marked by alienation and *unheimlichkeit*, but is rather profoundly 'in place' in the world.[112] "The Jew", in contrast, "does not have the fundamental basis in the world that the pagan has", Levinas affirms. "Within a milieu of complete confidence in things, he is eaten away by a mute unease" (94). Being-in-creation, that is, the existence in being whose totality is called into question by beyond, generates an ingrained element of insecurity and alienation. The Jew, not Dasein, is truly *unheimlich*. The phenomenological opposition between being-pagan and the Jewish being-in-creation will be expressed in Levinas's later works in the claim that the experience governing the encounter with the Other is not that of revelation or givenness from within, as per Heidegger, but of fundamental separation, of holiness. In other words, it will be reformulated as the distinction between ontology and what he calls 'ethics' (Hammerschlag, 2010, 141).

An essay from 1937, "The Meaning of Religious Practice", reveals this structure as well (Levinas, 2005). The essay's subject matter seems far removed from anything Heideggerian, and characteristically Heidegger's name is not evoked. Yet closer examination suggests that the German philosopher is in the background, and similar features of the confrontation between Judaism and paganism are evident here as well. In this essay Jewish ritual and practice is described as a 'pause' from, or 'interruption' of, the familiar order of being. Jews do not "feel themselves immediately at home" in a world in which entities "are familiar, everyday, and profane". To the contrary, "nothing is entirely familiar, entirely profane" to them (288). Interrupting the simple familiarity of the world with its strange misplacedness, Jewish ritual sheds a new light on the world, making the very existence of anything "infinitely surprising" (ibid). In Levinas's presentation, Jewish ritual takes on existential and ontological significance through the estranged attunement to being it produces. Perhaps alluding to Heidegger's appeal to the sheer wonder of the fact of being, Levinas claims that the Jew "experiences wonder at every instant at the fact – so simple and yet so extraordinary – that the world is there" (ibid).

[112] As Schonfeld (2015, 381) observes, Levinas consistently describes the existential feature of rivetedness in being with variations of *être rivé* and *irrémisibilité*.

This wonder, he continues, is equated to the belief in creation, "the basis of Judaism". While Levinas will leave behind some of the views expressed in this early essay, the seeds of the later bond between the priority of obligation and the category of creation are presented here. Particularly important, if somewhat striking, is the portrayal of Judaism as outside the natural order of the world. In Levinas's account, its commandments are so utterly misplaced and alien that it destabilizes the totality of what is and prompts an effect of ontological significance.[113] Judaism, which for Levinas means primarily rabbinic Judaism with its emphasis on commandments, laws, and obligations, is presented here as the 'other' of ontology, refashioning it by means of interruption. The basic phenomenological structure governing Levinas's early writings re-emerges here: the distinction between a non-Jewish, pagan mode of existence in which one is comfortably rooted in being, and a Jewish mode of existence in which one's sense of rootedness is interrupted and revamped from without. "Judaism", Levinas announces in 1939, "is nothing, in the final synthesis, but anti-paganism. It is anti-paganism *par excellence*" (Moyn, 1998, 46).

In this early stage, the task of overcoming Heidegger is particularly difficult since Levinas implicitly accepts the priority of the *Seinsfrage*, and hence must also accept the riveted character of being. He therefore centers on Heidegger's notion of *Geworfenheit* and refashions it in order to construct a Jewish experience of being-in-creation that shares a departure point but ultimately differs from being-pagan. This begins already in the 1935 essay "On Escape", where Levinas delineates what he considers to be the fundamental experience of human existence: the sense of being nauseatingly trapped in being, the urge to escape its suffocating effect, and the inability to do so. In Levinas's depiction, it is a pressing experience, one which smothers the freedom and activity governing the possibility-actualizing Dasein and evinces pure passivity. It has been noted that this portrayal of human existence reflects the historical experience of a Jew in Europe with the rise of Nazism, entrapped and unable to escape the fateful facticity of her Jewishness (Rolland, in Levinas, 2003, 29-32). This suggestion is evidently correct, for in a short text from the same year Levinas describes the specific existential features of the Jew in a

[113] For Levinas (1990b, 13), as for Strauss, "the Judaism with a historic reality – Judaism, neither more nor less – is rabbinic".

world plagued by Hitlerism with similar terms: "the pathetic fate of a Jew becomes a fatality. One can no longer flee it. The Jew is ineluctably fixed to his Judaism" (1935, 4). Indeed, Levinas later states:

> "During these years before the war I wrote philosophical texts which had no specific Jewish thematic to them but which probably stemmed from that which the Judaic classifies or suggests as the human. One of these texts, De l'évation, was republished a short while ago […] In the original text, written in 1935, one can distinguish the anxieties of the war to come. And the whole fatigue of being, the condition of that period" (Robbins, 2001, 39).

Additionally, the existential feature of entrapment in being is conceptualized by Levinas as a sense of persecution, which is precisely the trope with which he will soon describe the Jewish experience in his private notebooks from his captivity in a German camp for French Prisoners of War (Malka, 2006, 64-82). "In persecution I rediscover the original sense of J[udasim], its initial emotion", he writes. "This is not just any persecution", he continues, portraying an early and undeveloped version of the notion of radical persecution central to *Otherwise than Being*, "[but] an absolute persecution, which pursues the being everywhere so as to enclose it in the bare fact of its existence" (Fagenblat, 2015, 307; Weber, 1995).

This phenomenological description has a political dimension as well. Just as Heidegger's pagan phenomenology suggests a totalitarian political programme of violence, the divergent phenomenology of Jewish existence translates into a scheme of nonviolence. As Levinas writes in his 1939 eulogy for Pope Pious XI, the Jewish (and Christian) experience of estrangement from the natural world constitutes a "resistance to the cult of power and earthly greatness" of paganism (Levinas, 1939, 3). The conceptualization of Judaism as a nonviolent force opposing the dominance and power of an ontology of totality prefigures the prophetic messianism of peace enveloped in *Totality and Infinity* and the fraternity of prophetic witnessing in *Otherwise than Being*, signalling to the clear political impulse in Levinas's philosophy.

While the sealed being within which we are imprisoned is the self-enclosed pagan world brought to bear by Heidegger, there is a fundamental difference between pagan *Geworfenheit* and Jewish rivetedness, according to Levinas. Especially in the mid-1940s, in the midst of the holocaust, Levinas found the Jewish modality of being to be personified in the biblical figures of Job and the suffering servant from chapter 53 of Isaiah, who take ownership over their painful facticity, pure passivity, and

submission, and turn it into elected purposefulness (Schonfeld, 2015). In a passage from his wartime notebooks, he writes:

> "[I]t is here also (chapter 53 of Isaiah) - in the despondency which no one would know how to comprehend – that the divine presence is revealed. The situation of pure submission where there is an election in the sense of the love of a person who brushes against you (caress). Or rather revelation of an order different from the natural order – real despite all the failures of the natural order. An intoxication of this useless suffering, of this *pure passivity* by which one becomes like the son of God".

He then continues:

> "This is very important: the pure 'submission' is not a sensation of the arbitrariness of the world. It can be thus when the eyes are turned toward the world. But submission here becomes: filiality" (Fagenblat, 2015, 307).

Levinas introduces here, in the context of "the original sense of J[udaism]", the idea of filiality and fecundity that will figure in *Totality and Infinity* as paradigmatic of the eschatological time of being-toward-beyond-death and "having time for the other". The emblematic character of these biblical characters, who are also invoked in the 1957 essay "A Religion For Adults" and the 1963 essay "The Trace of the Other", and whose resonances are palpable in the discussion of vicarious suffering in *Otherwise than Being*, is reasserted in a 1945 essay, "The Jewish Experience of the Prisoner", where Levinas announces: "what is Judaism if not an experience, since Isaiah, since Job, of the possibility of this reversal – prior to hope, from the depth of despair – of pain to happiness; the discovery of signs of election in pain itself" (Schonfeld, 2015, 390). This idea is similarly disclosed in an important essay two years later, where being-Jewish is said to bear "the odd resonance of Isaiah chapter 53 and the book of Job" (Levinas, 2007:208), which for Levinas amounts to achieving the "unexpected transformation of misfortune into praise".[114]

In this 1947 essay, appropriately named "Being Jewish", Levinas openly elaborates on what was thus far only implied, namely, that he is developing a hermeneutic of Jewish facticity as an ontological category. A few years earlier, in his wartime notebook number 7, he already indicates this by noting - "to begin from *Dasein* or begin from J' [*Juif*]. J' as a category" (Levinas, 2009, 75). In "Being Jewish" Levinas primarily responds to the existentialist notions articulated by "the great talent of Sartre" in

[114] Translation amended.

"Anti-Semite and Jew" (1944) and "the genius of Heidegger". His ontological alternative of being-Jewish centres on countering the categories of 'facticity', 'thrownness' and 'resoluteness' with phenomenologically determined notions of 'creation', 'election', and 'commandment'. Unlike the existentialists stress on the present or futural orientation, Levinas presents an alternative temporality whereby being-created, having an origin, opens a dimension of past - "the infinite time behind us" - into the present. The Jew is not simply thrown, she is riveted to her being, but this rivetedness is experienced positively, as finding herself *already* chosen and commanded into being. "The imperative of the creation that is continued in the imperative of the commandment and of the law inaugurates a total passivity", he writes. "To do the will of God is in this sense the condition of facticity". Unlike Heschel, who too argues that 'to be' fulfils the divine command of creation, and unlike Heidegger's account of authenticity whereby Dasein owns up to its thrownness and conceives it as Fate and Destiny, for Levinas being-Jewish, as created, chosen, and commanded, is utterly passive. In this respect, Jewish rivetedness antecedes and intensifies Dasein's *Geworfenheit*, but at the same time, Levinas claims, it bears a positivity that is inaccessible in a hermetically immanent Heideggerian world.

The dimension of origin and beyond in "a world that is without origin and simply present" Levinas terms 'religion', which he considers to be the Jewish contribution to the illumination of human existence: "The Jew is the very entrance of the religious event into the world; better yet, he is the impossibility of a world without religion" (Levinas, 2007, 209). This allows Levinas to declare that Jewish existence is "the fulfilment of the human condition". The airtight immanence of Dasein's existential structure and its temporal constitution rules out the perspective that gives access to this begotten positivity. These phenomenologically construed religious notions emerge as a competing Jewish account of existence to the one extended by Sartre and by Heidegger, and they will assume an emphatic ethical charge in Levinas's later works, where they transform into the an-archical passivity and the immemorial past of the being-for-the-other and by-the-other. Indeed, the model of election presented in "Being-Jewish" is formulized and universalized in the important section 'Substitution' in *Otherwise than Being*. There, phrased almost verbatim, it exhibits the structure of the subject as already commanded to ethical responsibility by the other person (Levinas, 1991b, 113).

A Secularized Judaism

As we can see, in his early writings Levinas set out to forge an alternative to the Heideggerian being-in-the-world by formalizing the experience of being-Jewish into a modality of existence, and in so doing he challenges the claim for exclusivity of Heidegger's analysis of Dasein. The ontological category of being-Jewish, he believes, is not only a more apt phenomenology of human existence, but it also avoids the interconnected philosophical, theological, political, and ethical pitfalls of which Heidegger's framework is guilty. From the way in which Levinas structures his thought vis-à-vis Heidegger, an apparent binary emerges between pagan existence and Jewish existence, Dasein and J'. Testifying to the impact of the dualistic structures of the German interwar theological discourse, these binaries permeate Levinas's thought and concur with the 'logic of interruption' that finds its initial expression in his youthful writings and becomes dominant in his mature works. There is little doubt that the either/or rhetoric inserts an urgency into the discussion and plays into Levinas's attempt to distinguish himself decisively from his teacher. However, this rhetoric does not do justice to the internal logic of Levinas's arguments. The trouble is not, as Dominique Janicaud charges, *that* Levinas smuggles theological categories and structures into his phenomenology, but rather *which* ones he smuggles in, and *what* he does with them. Already in his early essays and certainly in his mature works, Levinas's overriding aim is not simply to reject the concept of totality, but to object to its presumptuous claim for exclusivity and hence to reconceive it in light of, or in relation to, otherness. Levinas must presuppose the ontology of totality, as described above all by Heidegger, for it to be fissured by alterity. In this respect, Levinas's Jewish alternative subverts Heidegger's totalitarian framework but at all times still stands in relation to it and indeed depending on it.

The dichotomous façade set up by Levinas is further problematized by the Heideggerian approach he takes. This is highlighted if we consider Hermann Cohen, who developed a text-based philosophical structure "from the sources of Judaism". A cautious comparison between Levinas and Cohen is surely appropriate, due to their shared emphasis on ethics, their prophetically-inspired conception of Jewish-universal messianism (see below), and their adherence to reason, among other points. Yet importantly, Levinas does not follow Cohen's path - nor even Husserl's, for that matter - but rather Heidegger's, and carves out a basic mode of existence which he associates with a distinctive Jewish being-in-the-world.

Stated otherwise, Levinas opposes Heidegger's philosophy of radical immanence *by means* of Heideggerian phenomenology. We are thus presented with a prefiguration of Habermas's post-war suggestion to proceed "mit Heidegger gegen Heideggers Denken", rendered in a Jewish key (Habermas, 1973). Unsurprisingly, the dialectical tension between *mit* and *gegen* results in a countering Jewish account that struggles to leave the orbit of Heidegger's thought.

Importantly, Levinas's tangled effort to articulate a hermeneutic of Jewish facticity as an alternative to Heidegger's existential analysis of Dasein is also driven by a desire to elaborate on what Rosenzweig called *Judensein* (Gibbs, 1992; Cohen, 1994; Handelman, 1991). Generally, it can be suggested that Hegel to Rosenzweig is what Heidegger is to Levinas. Levinas adopts Rosenzweig's view that the essence of Judaism is disclosed in Jewish existence. In a later essay, he asserts that for Rosenzweig, "Judaism is no longer just a teaching whose theses can be true or false; Jewish existence […] itself is an essential event of being; Jewish existence is a category of being" (Levinas, 1990b, 183). In his own work Levinas affirms Rosenzweig's view and pits it against Heidegger's existential analysis, as noted in chapter 2. However, it is important to notice that Rosenzweig's particularistic notion of being-Jewish as an ontological category is reemployed universally by Levinas. Moreover, in Levinas its meaning is clarified and illuminated through a set of theological connotations and religious content, such as the notions of persecution, election, commandment and creation.

We now touch upon the important issue of secularization. Levinas constantly uses religious terminology to convey his thought, while often denying it of any theological import.[115] He openly and repeatedly professes, for example, that by 'Jewish' he does not mean a specific nation, tradition, or confessional faith. "Jewish election", for example, is not interpreted traditionally but is rather "the very mystery of personhood" (Levinas, 2007, 209-10). The inescapable Jewish condition reflects the human condition, he says, and the Jewish fate is the human fate. 'Jew' is a universal category. "The recourse of Hitlerian

[115] Levinas' statements on the matter are hardly consistent, varying from insistence on the absolute separation between faith and his thought to more frequent descriptions of proximity and even reconciliation. Levinas presents contradicting claims relating to his designation as a Jewish thinker as well. As he grew older and as his standing in the French philosophical world was secured, he was increasingly willing to admit to the religious sources and objectives of his thinking.

anti-Semitics to racial myth", he relates, "reminded the Jew of the irremissibility of his being. Not to be able to flee one's condition – for me this was like vertigo. Granted, this is a human situation, and in this the human soul is perhaps naturally Jewish" (208). Levinas thus stakes out an alternative universal phenomenology from the particular existential experience of being-Jewish. Effectively, the employed Jewish categories are stripped of their particularistic religious content and formulized into a phenomenological structure. Once formulized, they are perceived as the factical or existential ground capturing an elemental truth about human existence and being that would not have been disclosed otherwise. By defusing their initial particularistic theological charge, Levinas constructs an all-inclusive Jewish corrective to paganism. This of course bears resemblance and indeed presents itself as a deliberate response to the way in which Heidegger de-theologizes Christian categories in his Dasein analytic. By means of Heideggerian phenomenology, Levinas discovers, analyses, and disperses the truth about the human condition that is disclosed in being-Jewish.

Seemingly, here is another moment in which Levinas follows his teacher's principles: he approves that even if fundamental revelations regarding human existence are imparted in a religious context, a phenomenological investigation into these revelations necessitates a formal indication that gains access to originary manifestations of modalities of being through the directive of religious categories disposed of religious content. On this account, phenomenology is a non-theological or at least an a-theological endeavor. Levinas's repeated insistence on the theological neutrality of what we called 'being-in-creation' and the religiously-infused terminology of his later philosophy seems to cohere with Heidegger's a-theistic methodology. But as is the case with Heidegger, also the secularization enacted by Levinas does not only neutralize, but also importantly preserves fundamental features of the repressed religious background. Not only explicit content but also formulized structure betrays, overtly or covertly, theological presuppositions. Levinas's formulized notions of existential facticity continue to harbour the imprint of Jewish categories, texts, historical experiences, and aspirations. Recalling our analysis in chapter 1, it should be noted that not only the dualistic structures but also Heidegger's claim for an a-theistic methodology is informed by a Protestant theological heritage that became dominant between the wars. By aping Heidegger, Levinas enacts his phenomenology of being-Jewish within this

heritage.[116] In this respect, Levinas, as a man of his time, reflects on and articulates his Jewishness through the theoretical resources available to him and which he finds compelling.

There is, however, a crucial difference between the way in which Heidegger and Levinas activate phenomenology a-theistically. Both philosophers agree on the limitations of phenomenology with respect to the knowledge of what lay beyond consciousness's intentionality. But for Heidegger, secularization is in the service of phenomenology, while Levinas resolves to tread beyond phenomenality and representation, and think the resonances or traces of transcendence in phenomenality, which he calls 'the religious'. His grammar of secularization opens a sphere of religiosity that affords a God "not contaminated by being" (1991b, xlii) and thus is part of an effort to situate his thought outside the boundaries of ontology and what he calls 'theology', or onto-theological determinations. This dynamic is present in his conception of 'atheism' and is intensified in *Otherwise than Being* and later essays where he veers towards - or beyond - negative theology (Levinas, 1998b, 55-78). "Theological language", he maintains, "destroys the religious situation of transcendence" (1991b, 197). Heidegger would no doubt agree with this. For him, too, philosophy gestures towards the religious, into an opening to a purer modality of religiosity. Indeed, there is no exaggerating the impact of Heidegger's anti-metaphysics and critique of onto-theology on Levinas. But part of Levinas's strategy is to accuse Heidegger of partaking in the very onto-theological scheme Heidegger himself finds faulty and to posit over against it a secularized account of Judaism as ethics. And *as* ethics, it springs from the fixation with the Other, which also charts how God is given without capitulating to onto-theological pitfalls. While Heidegger admittedly plays with the boundaries of phenomenology, he does not in final analysis cross them. For both, the secularization is propaedeutic to a deeper and more genuine de-secularization, but for Heidegger this never leaves the boundaries of philosophy, while for Levinas there is, ultimately, a unison of the holiness in philosophy and the God of religion. That the

[116] Fagenblat (2010, xxv) suggests reading Levinas's philosophy as a secularization of what he calls the "Jewish covenant of faith", yet he mainly takes the 'Judaic' to be ideas expressed in Jewish traditional texts. In following studies this view is modified, and the secularization enacted by Levinas is likened to Heidegger's idea of 'formal indication' of the factical life. See also Fagenblat (2014a) and (2015). I agree with Fagenblat on this point, although he is inattentive to the underlying theological commitments of the alleged a-theistic methodology involved. Moreover, I claim not only that there is an analogy with Heidegger's formal indication, but that Levinas is deliberately following Heidegger on this matter in order to formulate an alternative to his programme.

sublation of the ontological ultimately arrives at the religious, that the divine is approached through the height of the face, that the ethical life obsessed by the Other is perceived as holy - these expose that for Levinas, the ethical life is the religious life and vise-versa; ethics is the "religiosity of the religious" (Derrida, 1997, 96; Robbins, 2001, 49).[117]

Lost in Translation

I have thus far suggested that after Heidegger joined Hitler, Levinas comes to understand the latent theological biases in *Sein und Zeit* as germane to his teacher's philosophical and political failures. In response, he turns to his own tradition and experience to develop a Jewish corrective to Heidegger's paganism. The best way to understand what he is doing methodologically is to perceive him as mimicking Heidegger's formal indication and its accompanying secularization. Levinas believes that the formal structures of Judaism, derived phenomenologically and hence, following Heidegger's footsteps, ontologized, universalized, and secularized, can serve as an appropriate philosophical rejoinder to the plight of the West embodied in Heidegger. What comes into focus here is that the language of translation used by Levinas to describe his work is misleading.[118] Among the ambiguities and difficulties attached to this metaphor is the fact that it presupposes a solidified, stable, and unchanging account of Judaism and overlooks many of its historical manifestations, as well as that it gives the impression that his philosophy is exclusively channelling Jewish wisdom while other sources of influence, such as Protestant theology, Russian literature, and indeed Heidegger's philosophy, are disregarded. Importantly, the metaphor of translation presupposes two distinct registers of thought, wherein there is some content in one – in this case Judaism - that is unavailable in the other – in this case, philosophy - and which will remain unavailable until the act of translation. Yet if the translation is to succeed, it is only because the content being translated can fully give itself to philosophy. This means that it *is* available to philosophy, thereby making the endowing role of Judaism, and the act of

[117] As Levinas told Derrida (1994, 4): "You know, one often speaks of ethics to describe what I do, but what really interests me in the end is not ethics, not ethics alone, but the holy, the holiness of the holy".

[118] Much has been written on this topic. See for example, Gibbs (1992, 155-75) and (1993); Batnitzky (2007) and (2006, 3-24); Chalier (2013); Wright (1999); Putnam (20006). Meir accepts the metaphor of translation at face value – "Levinas was a master of translation" (2008, 262) - without attending to the problems it generates. A reading of Levinas with the background of two millennia of Jewish philosophy is offered by Trigano (2001). Trigano shows that many notions of Levinas's idiosyncratic terminology are in fact translations from Hebrew.

translation, redundant. On the other hand, if there is some untranslatable core content in Judaism – or to put it in the language of *Otherwise than Being*, if the Saying of Jerusalem is betrayed by the Said of philosophy - then the translation becomes futile, for what is most important is non-transferable. The language of translation similarly entails that Levinas identifies nothing ethical in philosophy and nothing philosophical in Judaism. Yet neither is correct: Descartes's idea of the infinity of God as thought by the *res cogitans* wherein "the I from the first *thinks more that it thinks*" and Plato's notion of the 'Good beyond Being' are taken up by Levinas and interpreted ethically as 'prophetic moments' situated within the philosophical tradition. Likewise, his Jewish writings demonstrate time and again the philosophical layer of Judaism. Once again, Levinas's rhetoric obscures the underlying logic that neither Greece nor Jerusalem represent pure forms, nor that they are mutually exclusive. Greece possesses an internal ethical sensitivity and Judaism is not foreign to philosophical conceptuality (Fagenblat, 2010, 1-20).

Our examination of Levinas's early writings allows us to nuance one of the prevailing assumptions of the critical research of Levinas, namely, that the main thrust of his thought is a response to the holocaust.[119] Guiding this view is the sense that the construction of philosophy of absolute ethical commitment reflects a noble response to the ultimate betrayal of being manifested in the holocaust. In the wake of such unprecedented evil, so this common view goes, Levinas concludes that goodness cannot reside in being but instead must erupt from without. There is also a 'Jewish' inflection at play: the ethical philosophy of Levinas, the Jew, is a response to the Nazi murder of the Jewish people (including some of Levinas's family members). There is no denying the momentous impact of the holocaust on Levinas and his thought, nor that it became the 'resonance chamber' of his philosophical corpus, nor still that his post-war writings are fixated on the ethical. Yet we have seen that the development of some of the core structures and central features of his later thought predate the trauma of the holocaust and are concocted in his pre-holocaust phenomenological framing of being-Jewish in opposition to being-pagan. It is true that the markedly ethical tenor of Levinas's thought is not yet

[119] I follow here Moyn (2006b, 195-6). Cf. Bernstein (2006).

fleshed out to the same depth, extent, and radicalism as it is in his post-holocaust writings. One might suggest that this is because in his early stage Levinas is still embedded in the general Heideggerian presumption that one's fundamental relation to being is ontological, and thus his Jewish alternative denotes a different *manner* of exercising this relation. But Levinas never completely abandons this perspective: he resolves to advance beyond being because he *accepts* both the prominence and the final impotence of the Heideggerian *Seinsfrage*. Yet even if the commanding quality of the face and the thematic of substitution are yet to emerge, an ethical impulse is nevertheless already present in the link between Hitlerism and Heideggerianism and in the conceptualization of sheer being as harbouring an evil expungable only by the acute effect of transcendence. There is a danger of overstating the argument and presenting a simplistic picture of a single, linear trajectory in Levinas's thought while ignoring important shifts and developments, which no doubt exist (Bergo, 2005). Nor should it be argued that every idea of Levinas's mature works originates in his earlier writings. However, the significant continuity of Levinas's pre- and post-war writings and the manner in which central building blocks of his mature philosophy find their nascent articulation in his early writings should not be underestimated. Thus, insofar as Levinas's philosophy as a whole is to be conceived as a response to anything, it seems justified to locate the earlier moment of Heidegger's enrolment in the Nazi party on 1 May 1933 as the event that woke Levinas from his 'Heideggerian slumber' and urged him to set out on the philosophical path that ultimately laid the foundation for his post-holocaust reflections. This also means that the ethical imperative figuring so prominently in Levinas's thought is first and foremost the result of the way in which he conceptualizes the ramifications of a radically immanent worldview and the breaching effect of transcendence.

Against Paganism: Ethics

Throughout the 1950s and onwards, Levinas develops a robust philosophical account underscoring the primacy of the ethical, culminating in the doubled peak of *Totality and Infinity* (1961) and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974). Heidegger remains a central foil and adversary of Levinas's post-war writings, now more directly than before. The previous strategy of posing an alternative ontological outlook now gives way to a questioning of the ultimacy of the ontological. Initially in "Is

Ontology Fundamental?" (1951) as well as "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity" (1957), Levinas articulates his sustained accusation that "Heideggerian ontology subordinates the relation with the other to the relation with the Neuter, Being". In effect, it participates in the violent reduction of otherness to sameness and the denial of transcendence typical of traditional ontology. This, Levinas insists, is especially true with regards to "being-with-the-other-person – *Miteinandersein*", which is a relation with a being and thus within the compass of ontology (1991a, 1-11; 1987a, 47-59). Despite his originality, then, Heidegger is not a break from the history of Western philosophy but rather its prime representative. With the solidification of Levinas' ethical focus, the transcendence to which Heidegger's pagan ontology is said to be impenetrable to is first and foremost the transcendence of the other person. This means that the familiar claim that in Levinas the face dons the trait of God as radical otherness is true but incomplete, for as we have seen, in Levinas's early writings, the monotheistic God, Judaism, and the Jew are all depicted as radical exteriority interrupting the familiar order.

The conceptual ties between ontology, violence, paganism, and rootedness remain emphatic in Levinas's post-war rejoinder to Heidegger. "Ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power", he declares, for the eradication of the Other through its subordination to being in general "leads inevitably to another power, to imperialist domination, to tyranny" (Levinas, 1969, 46). With recognizable vocabulary, Levinas claims that the origin of this tyranny lies "in the pagan 'moods', in the enrootedness in the earth" (46-47). The centrality of being in Heidegger both undergirds and is manifested in the "pagan existing" advocated by National Socialism. Yet the consequence of the pagan impulse of "this earth-maternity" is more wide ranging, as it "determines the whole Western civilization of property, exploitation, political tyranny, and war" (52, 53). Ultimately, the ideational project that occupies Levinas in his mature philosophical works is to reverse the priorities of "the well-known theses of Heideggerian philosophy" and establish the precedence of beings over being, metaphysics over ontology, justice and obligation over freedom and thought. These reversals are enacted by setting the Other as primal to the Same, a task described as overturning the philosophical priorities set by the Greeks and "following a tradition at least as ancient" - the biblical prophetic tradition. This tradition, which is "not necessarily religious" but rather "philosophical", respects otherness and "does not read

right in might" (1991a, 53). Levinas thus delineates a philosophical programme that challenges western ontology through what he calls the revelation of the face and the absolute submission to the needs of the Other. The encounter with the other person exceeds the confines of ontology and hence repels its inherent dynamic of power and violence.

For Levinas in *Totality and Infinity*, we comport our life with a desire for mastery over our surroundings. This provides enjoyment, which precedes the practical instrumentality of Dasein and manifests our concrete freedom. But the revelation of the Other in its nudity, defencelessness, and defiance of conceptualization disrupts the self's freedom and spontaneity and resists its passion for mastery. To the desire for control and assimilation the face expresses a command: "thou shall not kill". The intrinsic ethical quality of the 'non-allergic' ethical encounter with the Other's is rooted in its plea to respect its alterity, resist the urge of effacement, and respond to its plight. In place of the Heideggerian Dasein, of which, according to Levinas, *mit-Sein* is encompassed in the 'mineness' of its own project and thus lodged in egology, he posits an account of human being whose responsibility towards the suffering of the other person constitutes the very structure of subjectivity. In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas radicalizes this perspective once more, now calling for an absolute responsibility to the Other *prior* to the emergence of any such subjectivity.

The Violence of History and Prophetic Messianism

Examining Levinas's conception of history is particularly conducive for illuminating the way in which Heideggerianism is contrasted to his philosophy and account of Judaism. In *Totality and Infinity* Levinas challenges Heidegger's paganist ontological totalitarianism and the militancy of the philosophical ontology rooted in Greece with a philosophy of "originary peace" drawn from the prophetic tradition. As he establishes, the non-intuitional relation with the Other produces a life oriented by eschatology. This loaded term is understood not as a scheme of the 'last things' but as a sense of direction and obligation for history through "institut[ing] a relation with being *beyond the totality* or beyond history". History is totality; it is where justice is passed over and the pain of the conquered is ignored. Ubiquitous oppression is superficially appeased by contextualization or abjectly explained away by theodicies. Levinas seeks to destabilize this conception of history. He even wishes

to undercut the distinction at play in Heidegger between the 'objective' constructivism of narratives in *Historie* and the enactment of being in *Geschichte,* for neither spring from the relation with the Other.[120] For Levinas, "when man truly approaches the Other he is uprooted from history" (1969, 52).

Significantly, his account of eschatology aims to overcome the understanding of history associated with Hegel, which allows for nothing outside it and subjugates any given moment to the crowning purpose of the course of history. These principles, Levinas insists, are perpetuated in Heidegger and thus both German philosophers are exemplary manifestations of the propagation of sameness and the denial of exteriority. The Hegelian and Heideggerian model, whereby, according to Levinas, history is a homogeneous plane of identical temporal moments, can only account for time as synchrony. In his anti-teleological, eschatological model, the interruption of the infinite institutes "judgment" and "restores to each instance its full signification in that very instant" (ibid, 23).[121] Thus the eschatological interruption dismantles totality and the logic of war and beckons a peace more originary than an extended ceasefire.

Levinas is no doubt correct that Heidegger's concerns intersect with Hegel's philosophy in significant moments. Heidegger believed that his philosophical project necessitates a "historical confrontation" with Hegel, who represents the high-point of the metaphysical tradition he sought to overcome (GA 36/37, 13-14/Heidegger, 2010b, 10). There are clear points of comparison between the two, especially in their histories of philosophy and being and in their insistence on the immanence of their unfolding. Yet Heidegger rejects the concept of history as a homogeneous plane of identical temporal moments, and it may be more accurate to say that Heidegger's depiction of the history of philosophy is an "inversion of Hegelianism", whereby history does not progress towards absolute knowledge but advances into the oblivion of the truth of being (Haar, 1993, 72). In fact, Heidegger's core contention with the Hegelian system is that it does not take negativity and nothingness "seriously", but rather methodologically sublimates them in its dialectical advancement towards the fulfilment of absolute

[120] Although Heidegger's position is more complex, and continued to evolve, radicalize, and take into account inherent alterity through the development of the ideas of '*Ereignis*' and '*der andere Anfang*'. On this see Nelson (2014).
[121] Cf. Bernasconi (1998); Ward (1996).

Geist (GA 68:45-49; Dahlstrom, 2011; Johnson, 2016). This, indeed, sails close to Levinas's own critique of Heidegger. Moreover, Heidegger's hermeneutical approach to Dasein's historicity and the negation and nothingness at the heart of what he calls the a-byss of the clearing or *Aletheia* signals towards multiplicity, incompleteness, and non-absolutism, and is thus inconsistent with the confidence, privileging of unity, and triumphalism attributed to Hegel by Levinas. It should be recalled that we have witnessed the resistance to Heidegger's philosophy of history as an extension of the resistance to Hegel already in our analysis of Buber. Both Levinas and Buber find ties between Hegel's and Heidegger's totalized conception of history and their commitment to totalitarian leaders and states, and both confront this conception of history with a vision of prophetic history. Levinas parallels Buber in another related issue: he too rejects the portrayal of history as the march of the triumphant, and embraces a contrasting view of history as the chronicle of the oppressed and conquered. Also discernible is an anti-assimilationist impulse at play: both oppose Hegel's dialectical framework whereby Judaism is superseded by Christianity, and correspondingly grant Judaism a vital role on the world stage. Among other things, they differ in that Buber's vision locates the prophetic within the political arena and hence seeks to sanctify history, while Levinas's offers an ethics prior to any state or political situation and his prophetic messianism is, at least *prima facie*, beyond the political and the historical. Buber's account of prophetic history is also grounded in actual exegesis of the biblical prophets' books, however idiosyncratic, while Levinas's view of prophetic messianism is instructed by a loosely substantiated affiliation of nonviolence and ethical obligations with what he takes to be the core message of the prophets.

One may question the nonviolence of Levinas' interruptive prophetic eschatology of peace, for it is undeniable that there is an inherent violence in the unexpected, vertical rupture of the Other. From a political-theological perspective, this interruption features an authoritative, despotic modality which projects force rather than peace. Levinas repeats this model of interrupted temporality in his discussion of 'proximity' in *Otherwise than Being*, where he considers the neighbour to be "a disturbance of the memorable time. One can call that apocalyptically the break-up of time" (1991b, 89). Perhaps inadvertently fleshing out the internal logic of his position and radicalizing it, Levinas's terminology

in *Otherwise than Being* is openly aggressive and violent. In this work, Levinas describes the subject as engrossed by a non-reciprocal obsession with the Other, as being disturbed by and hostage of the Other, against its will - "condemned without being able to speak, persecuted". Levinas also asserts that the self is traumatized by the proximity to the Other and the infinite debt to it. Anarchy, suffering, psychosis, and hatred are some more alarming terms employed to describe the total ownership of the Other over the dis-placed self. Levinas claims that these experiences, pointing to the radical passivity of the subject, make compassion possible, and without them there would be no ethics. Yet he does not sufficiently justify why the complete subordination of one's self to the Other or the radical demand for substitution is not inversed violence against the self. Is this not a substitution of one violent picture with another (Haar, 1997)? This point was raised by Paul Ricoeur, and Levinas's response, that "holiness excludes all interest" (de Saint Cheron, 2010, 22), implies a justification of violence in the name of holiness and only makes matters worse. Perhaps this should be expected, insofar as Levinas's ethical picture is rooted in the hermeneutic of facticity of Jewish existence, pressed by the violence of persecuation and victimization, which he claims affords access to constitutive features of being as such.

Ethics, Judaism, and Demythologization

Some of Levinas's early readers were quick to pick up on the Judaic accent of his philosophy. Gabriel Marcel, for example, askes Levinas: "Why do you always say 'the Other' when you know that the term exists in the biblical tradition as 'the neighbour'?" (Malka, 2006, 268). Jean-François Lyotard describes Levinas's philosophy as a thought of the Old Testament God, and echoes its contrast to Heidegger's paganism (1997, 22-3). Most famously, Derrida in his "Violence and Metaphysics" discloses that in contrast to Levinas's claim that his ethics condition theology, his version of ethics is in fact informed by a deeply religious, indeed Jewish, sensitivity. "Independent of its 'theological context' (an expression that Levinas would most likely reject)", Derrida asks, "does not this entire discourse collapse?" (1997, 103). Indeed, both his major philosophical works as well as countless essays are dotted with unmistakably religious terminology, such as revelation, monotheism, creation, election, face, holiness, prophecy, epiphany, glory, judgment, and trace. The face's plea is expressed as a biblical commandment, and the Other in need is rendered a widow, orphan, stranger, or neighbour (Kosky,

2001). Levinas commonly equates the philosophical programme he is offering to the journey of Abraham, who is awakened by an external call and leaves the rootedness of his fatherland to the non-belonging of the unknown. The Abrahamic linear trajectory, constantly proceeding into the unfamiliar, is contrasted to the circular motion of Ulysses, who embodies the Greek ontology of final arrival, whereby the Same returns unchanged to the nativity of its immanence (Levinas, 1986, 346-8; 1969, 102). No wonder it is with the Abrahamic response that Levinas chooses to express the ethical responsiveness - *me voici*, here I am, *hineni*.

The writing of his philosophical works coincided with a significant occupation with and output of writings on Jewish matters in which parallel teachings are expressed. Most noteworthy among these are his Talmudic readings (1990c), originating in an annual colloquium of French-Jewish intellectuals that was launched in 1957, and his 1963 collection of essays on Judaism entitled *Difficult Freedom* (1990c). In his Jewish writings, Levinas describes the Jewish orthopraxy as pre-eminently focused on the responsibility for the Other and bearing precisely the ethical core exhibited in his philosophical works. Equally important, many of the features associated with being-Jewish in Levinas's early writings reappear as the components of ethical existence. Indeed, Levinas would later openly admit that "it is a Jewish ordeal [*épreuve*] which is translated [*in Otherwise than Being*]", only to then make two further illustrative clarifications: that he makes no attempt to assert a dogmatic truth, and that "Judaism is an essential modality of all that is human" (Robbins, 2001, 97). The two sets of texts produced by Levinas - philosophical and Jewish - are rightly conceived as participating in a cohesive scheme of constructing a Jewish alternative to the pagan way of doing philosophy of which Heidegger is a prime representative. Alluding to the German philosopher, he writes in *Humanism of the Other*: "Biblical verses do not function here as proof but as testimony of a tradition and an experience. Don't they have as much right as Hölderlin and Trakl to be cited?" (2006, 66).

One important way in which the construction of an alternative can be perceived is the manner in which Levinas conceptualizes holiness and atheism. In conversation with Part I of Rosenzweig's *The Star*, Levinas describes the initial mode of selfhood in its absorption in the solitude of its interiority as "atheism", and its emergence is described as the death of "mythical" gods. Separation, that is, atheism

- which Levinas insists comes *before* the question of the affirmation or denial of God is even raised - is the precondition of the revelation of the infinitude of the face and of sociality. In an instructive passage, Levinas claims that "the separated being must run the risk of the paganism which evinces its separation and in which this separation is accomplished, until the moment that the death of these gods will lead it back to atheism and to the true transcendence" (1969, 142). Atheism is thus placed at the heart of the religious journey towards the self's ethical agency, since religion also demands the rejection of idolatry. "Faith purged of myth, the monotheistic faith, itself implies metaphysical atheism" (77). For the sanctity of the Other to be revealed, the world must be disenchanted and vacated of gods. Elsewhere Levinas notes that traditional philosophy "is atheism, or rather unreligion", and it is above all Heidegger who reveals how philosophy's "anti-religious essence become a religion in reverse". This is because in Heidegger's thought "atheism is a paganism, the pre-Socratic texts are anti-Scriptures" (Levinas, 1991a, 49; 1969, 40). It is clear, however, that while rejected, Heidegger's paganism inhabits a role in Levinas's overall scheme, for evacuating its gods serves as *praeparatio* to the emergence of the holiness of transcendence. In the essay "A Religion for Adults", the role and essence of Judaism is described precisely as enacting "a desacralization of the Sacred" (1990b, 18; 1990c, 141). Corresponding to his statement about "true transcendence" quoted above, here it is proclaimed that "Judaism teaches us a *real* transcendence" (1990b, 16). The distinction between paganism and Jewish monotheism does not revolve around the question of the number of existing deities - "Monotheism is not an arithmetics of the Divine", Levinas quips (ibid, 178) – but rather marks the difference between a mystified and demystified world. The radical expulsion of the divine from the world runs the risk of the denial of God, yet it is a risk that must be taken. "To ignore the true God is in fact only half an evil", he writes. "Atheism is better than the piety bestowed on mythical gods" (16). He similarly contends that "only through [atheism] can man be raised to the spiritual notion of the Transcendent. It is a great glory for the Creator to have set up a being capable of seeking Him or hearing Him from afar, having experienced separation and atheism" (15-16). This, indeed, is "the paradox of creation" (1969, 103).

For Levinas there is an inherent link between the sacralised world of Heideggerian paganism, and mystical, numinous religious experiences, as both accept an immediate encounter with the holy. His

aversion to mysticism is the other side of the coin of his rejection of systematized theology: both boast a direct access to God by ignoring separation and compromising transcendence, and both do not pass through the encounter with the other person. He expresses his concerns with the Christian notion of incarnation in similar terms: "the direct encounter with God, *this* is a Christian concept" (1994a, 247).[122] In his discussion of language in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas is careful to note that the 'holiness' of the Other "is without any odour of the 'numinous'" (1969, 195). As he makes clear through the epitaph of part 1 of *Difficult Freedom*, this is the Jewish attitude towards the holy. The epitaph, a citation of Rashi's commentary on Leviticus 10:2, "Let them not enter the sanctuary drunk", links the death of Aaron's sons by the foreign fire to their drunkenness, which Levinas takes to symbolize the idolatrous enthusiasm of numinal religiosity. It is no coincidence that Levinas claims Heidegger's philosophy illustrates "in what intoxication the lucid sobriety of philosophers is steeped" (1987a, 53). Levinas's rejection of the numinal form of spirituality is often - and rightly - attributed to the Lithuanian rabbinic *Mitnagdik* tradition within which he was raised, eminently critical of Hassidism's ecstaticism; yet it would be a mistake to overlook its anti-Heideggerian connotations as well. Thus, with clear Kantian reverberations, Levinas poses an opposition between Heidegger's juvenile, mystical, ecstatic, and non-ethical mode of being, and the Jewish, rational, ethical, atheistic monotheism, "a religion for adults".

As noted, at first Levinas rebukes Heidegger's framework for its radical immanence. The world of Dasein, he contends, is impenetrable to and hence void of *real* transcendence. The denial of transcendence leads to the situating of the gods *within* a sacralized world, and thus Heidegger's being becomes permeated with, rather than vacated of, the sacred. From Levinas's perspective, the godless world he advances in the name of Judaism differs decisively from the godless world of Heideggerian paganism. The crucial difference is that Heidegger's hermetically immanent world amounts to a denial of transcendence, while Judaism acknowledges and hence safeguards the transcendence of God by

[122] While this seems to be a polemical oversimplification of the notion of 'incarnation', Levinas does however commend Jesus as an exemplar of what he calls 'substitution'. In so doing Levinas is one with a long line of modern Jewish thinkers who endorse Jesus as a Jewish exemplar of ethics. And yet he nevertheless claims that we are each called upon to be messiahs; our responsibility is ours alone, and no one, not even Jesus, can substitute our absolute obligation toward the other (1991a, 53-60). Christian engagements with Levinas abound. See Webb (1999), Morrison (2003), Zimmerman (2013) Hart and Signer, eds. (2010), Ward (1995, esp. 147-70), Purcell (2006).

accepting the immanent world as bearing only a trace of the divine. But what safeguards this 'infinite qualitative difference' between the world and God from turning into a radical dualism or collapsing into a framework of radical immanence? There is apparently a fateful but thin line that separates paganism and religion, violence and ethics, totalitarianism and messianism, the absolutization of totality and the vindication of totality by infinity. In "Violence and Metaphysics" Derrida observes that "God alone keeps Levinas's world from being a world of pure and worst violence" (1997, 107). Yet in Levinas's later works, especially in *Otherwise than Being*, as God is pushed further and further into the darkness and becomes "not simply the 'first other', or the 'other *par excellence*', or the 'absolutely other', but other than the other, other otherwise", it is questionable whether this thin line can still uphold the weight of these distinctions (1998b, 69).

Judaism, Technology, and the gods

It is noteworthy that Levinas considers modern technology to be another leading force in the demystification of the world. His 1961 essay "Heidegger, Gagarin, and Us", prompted by the impression of Russian Astronaut Yuri Gagarin's successful journey into outer space, is a reflection on the religious significance of this event, within the explicit context of Heidegger's critique of technology. Eliciting either enthusiasm or apprehension, Gagarin's flight immediately came to symbolize the human triumph over nature and natural limitations by means of modern technology. In this essay, Levinas situates himself among the enthusiasts. For him, the potential danger in "technological things" is far exceeded by its "great hopes". Gagarin's flight in particular represents a strategic blow to "the eternal seductiveness of paganism", i.e., rootedness and transcendence in the world (Levinas, 1990b, 232).[123] Levinas draws on a variety of familiar Heideggerian images and examples to describe the pagan framework of transcendence in the mundane that is purportedly shattered by this flight:

> "[T]o follow a path that winds its way through fields, to feel the unity created by the bridge, the bridge that links two river banks and by the architecture of building, the presence of a tree,

[123] Another student of Heidegger who addresses the ties between secularization and technological development in these years is Hannah Arendt, who begins her 1958 work *The Human Condition* with a reflection on the launch of the Sputnik on October 4, 1957, an event she considers "second in importance to no other" (1958, 1). And see also her 1963 essay "The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man" (1968, 265-80).

> the chiaroscuro, of the forests, the mystery of things, of a jug, or worn-out shoes of a peasant girl, the gleam from a carafe of wine sitting on a white tablecloth" (232).[124]

Levinas rightly identifies that Heidegger's critique of technology participates in his effort to retrieve to the world a sense of immanent sacredness and mystery. "Technology", he declares in response, "wrenches us out of the Heideggerian world and the superstitions surrounding Place" (233). Thus Levinas maintains that technology is paired with Judaism as two anti-pagan, anti-Heideggerian forces spearheading the crusade against the pagan gods and the re-mystification of the world. Judaism and technology are modelled as fundamentally iconoclastic: unlike Christianity, Levinas notes, "Judaism has not sublimated idols – on the contrary, it has demanded that they be destroyed. Like technology, it has demystified the universe" (234). Interestingly, Levinas here comes close to Cassirer, who speaks of the rise of technology as the *Götterdämmerung* of myth, and similarly attributes to Judaism the role of combating and overcoming mythical paganism. Echoing his definition of Judaism as anti-paganism *par excellance* almost two decades earlier, Levinas now proclaims that "*The Sacred filtering into the world* – Judaism is perhaps no more than the negation of all that" (232). In this respect, one might say that for Levinas, Gagarin is a Jew. The sense of estrangement associated from early on with being-Jewish, in contrast to the Heideggerian *der Ort*, reappears here as well - "Judaism has always been free with regard to place". The 'politics of space' at play here should not be missed either, for as beyond place, as non-place, Judaism (like the Other) is utopian, messianic, while Heideggerian pagan rootedness is totalitarian (233).

Heidegger's reflections on technology, most programmatically presented in "The Question Concerning Technology", are primarily concerned not with technological artefacts but with the technological disclosure of being, the 'essence of technology', which Heidegger insists "is not technological". It is for this reason that he approaches the topic by reflecting on the difference between the Greek understanding of causation as "bringing forth [*Her-vor-bringen*]" out of concealment into unconcealment, and the modern-technological conception of causation as "manufacturing". The former

[124] Levinas's repeated claim, which has become an established assumption in critical scholarship, that "as for the later Heidegger, I am much less familiar with him" (Kearney 1984, 51; Levinas, 19991a, 115) is simply undefendable. There are too many references to too many of Heidegger's later works to argue otherwise, and Levinas's writings testify to the fact that he was, in fact, a close reader of these later writings.

"responds" to being, while the latter is a violet imposition [*Bestellen*] on being, which shows up as a replaceable resource [*Bestand*] aimed at production and consumption, lacking inherent significance. In his essay Levinas accuses Heidegger of holding a "reactionary" view, however Heidegger was not a Luddite. In fact, aware of this common misinterpretation, he specifically emphasizes that "I am not against technology" (Wisser, 1977, 43),[125] and that "it would be foolish to attack technology blindly. It would be shortsighted to condemn it as the work of the devil" (1969c, 53). Nor is he against technological advancement – he calls this "false romanticism" (GA 94, 356-7/ Heidegger, 2016, 260). He does, however, seek to unmask the metaphysical approach towards being underpinning it that "drives out every other possibility of revealing" (1977, 27). Even as he opposes the technological outlook once totalized and perceived as the exclusive horizon of disclosure and mode of truth, which he claims is the case in the present age of *das Gestell*, Heidegger does not sweepingly condemn technology, for he also recognizes in it a saving power.

Yet it is telling that Levinas's critique actually rests on a fundamental agreement with Heidegger. He mirrors Heidegger's view that technology is a configuration of truth, that *Technik* no longer denotes a certain aspect of human activity, but is rather a historical condition defining the modern era, and that technology is a demystifying force antithetical to 'dwelling'. He also concurs with Heidegger regarding the solidarity of technology and Judaism as a mode of revealing and the coupling of Judaism, technology, and uprootedness. While he would most likely add an anthropocentric intonation to Heidegger's ontological emphasis, Levinas would seemingly comply with Heidegger's proclamation that *Weltjudentum* is "the sort of human singularity [*Menschentümlichkeit*] which, being utterly unattached [*schlechthin ungebunden*], can undertake the uprooting of all beings from being as world-historical 'mission'" (GA 96, 243).

Clearly, the crux of their difference lies in the appraisal of technology and of the Jews as the technological people. But it is here that Levinas's identification of the mission of Judaism with the project of modernity, its technological progress, and the disenchantment of the world, is curious.

[125] Levinas acknowledges that according to some, "my article on Gagarin and Heidegger went too far". He does nevertheless insist that "there are texts in Heidegger on the place of man in Central Europe. Europe and the German West are central to him. There is a whole geopolitics in Heidegger" (1991a, 118).

Seemingly carried away by his anti-Heideggerian polemic or by the enthusiasm from the historical flight, Levinas accepts a dichotomy between technology and monotheistic iconoclasm on the one hand, and anti-technological Ludditism and paganism on the other. Not only does he minimize the perils that an overly enthusiastic technological frenzy holds in store for both humans and the world, he also grants it religious justification and dangerously conflates technological and ethical progress. Unlike Hans Jonas, who calls for "biblical restraints" on technology (Jonas, 1974b, 177), Levinas embraces technology as an instantiation of the biblical worldview. This is puzzling, for at the heart of modern technological progress is precisely the calculative, instrumentalizing approach that would seem to be guilty of the reductive and unchecked desire of the Same for prediction, assimilation, and control against which Levinas wages battle. And insofar as the scale and brutality of the horrors of the twentieth century are inconceivable without modern technology, Levinas by implication downplays the link between Nazism and technology -- a link that ultimately led a dismayed Heidegger *away* from the party.

For Heidegger, modern technology is a stage in the history of being whereby the metaphysical force of the will to power has outdone itself and wills nothing but blind will itself. It is, he writes, "the basic form of appearance in which the will to will arranges and calculates itself" (GA 7, 78/ Heidegger, 1973, 93). On the other hand, for Levinas, all human endeavors, including ontology, epistemology, history, and culture, are perceived in themselves as manifestations of the pagan will to power – all, that is, except for ethics, Judaism, and apparently, also modern technology. Consequently, the coupling of the Jewish mission with the progress of modernity inadvertently concedes to some Hegelian presuppositions regarding history that Levinas overtly rejects. The religious quality instilled into technological advancement grants it an overarching purposeful and almost teleological character. This is at odds with his understanding of an interruptive eschatological temporality and his attack on 'vulgar' spatializing temporality. To be sure, unlike Hegelianism, Levinas intends to depict this historical development as a progression towards or motivated by alterity. Yet in the way in which it is presented, it approximates the establishment of a *Heilsgeschichte* and can function as what he calls 'theodicy'. The difficulty that leads Levinas to signal in two opposing directions is this: his account of ontology and eschatology indicates that the meaning of history cannot be given within the historical order; hence the face, and

Judaism, are interruptions. Yet for Judaism to have actual effect, it must enter the historical order. But once Judaism is defined extra-historically, as a "rupture of the natural and historical" (Levinas, 1994b, 4), attaching it to a historical development as Levinas does in the "Gagarin" essay will inevitably make it susceptible to the very shortcomings of history he wishes to avoid. Is Judaism the motor of eschatology or its result? Does it interrupt history or operate within it? Levinas seems to affirm both 'prophetic' and Hegelian stances while presenting them as mutually exclusive.

This is precisely the tension between ethics on the one side, and ontology and politics on the other, which is crystalized towards the end of *Otherwise than Being*. With the notions of 'justice' and 'the third', Levinas wishes to attend to a certain insufficiency in *Totality and Infinity* and account for the more general social and political realm as well as for other Others, outside the dyad of the face to face encounter, whose demand on the subject is equally infinite and pressing. How is the transition from an-archial and nonviolent ethics to totalizing and violent politics achievable? Levinas claims that the third interrupts the responsibility emerging from face to face encounter, which "is troubled and becomes a problem when the third party enters" (1991b, 157). But he also describes the ethical as interrupting the ontological and the political. Is the third readily given or an interruption? Is it beyond the face or in some way present in the Other's face? The same contradictory impulses are displayed here too: on the one hand, the political concretizes ethics which would otherwise be an abstraction, and on the other hand, there is a refusal to compromise the purity and radicalism of the face to face encounter with the Other (Bernasconi, 1999).[126] Ethics and politics, like Judaism and history - and therefore, also Judaism and Heidegger - must be concurrent while distinct, neither entirely dependent nor entirely independent.

However – returning to the theme of technology - surely one can appreciate the objection to the status of "the earth as a coal mining district, the soil as a mineral deposit" (GA 7, 15) without being charged a pagan or a reactionary; and Levinas appears to have eventually come close to doing just that. A decade later he retracts his enthusiasm from Gagarin's flight, and in the essay "Ideology and Idealism" (1972) he responds to Gagarin's alleged declaration that he did not find God in outer space by professing:

[126] For an attempt to formulate a coherent account of Levinas's reflections on ethics and politics, see Morgan (2016).

> "The new condition of existence in the weightlessness of a space 'without sites' is still experienced, by the first man to be launched into space, as a *here*, as the *same* without a veritable alterity. The marvels of technology do not open the *beyond* where Science, their mother, was born! No outside at all in all these movements! What an immanence! What a bad infinite!" (1998b, 8).

Likewise, a year earlier Levinas considers the sciences in which man "is reduced purely and simply to the fields in which the operations of numbers unfold" to be inhumane. Aware that he is agreeing with Heidegger on this point, he immediately differentiates himself from the "ambitious philosophical enterprise in aid of thought and against pure calculation", which in Levinas's explanation is guilty of "subordinating the human to the anonymous gains of Being and, despite its 'Letters on Humanism', bringing understanding to Hitlerism itself" (1990b, 281). Also in his "Secularization and Hunger" (1976), Levinas asserts that "no one is mad enough to fail to recognize the contradictions and the miscalculations of technology and its new, murderous dangers and bondage, and the mythologies which it threatens, and the pollution which results from it". But he also goes on to remind that the condemnation of technology forgets its implicit ethical promise, for in the present world, "without the development of technology, [humanity] could not be fed" (1998c, 9). In this context, Levinas's complaint that Heidegger's Dasein is never hungry (1969, 134) is worthy of mention.

Evidently, Levinas revisits his previous enthusiasm and posits that technology is not one with ethical advancement, but rather valuable only insofar as it promotes ethical justice and reduces mythicization, that is, only insofar as it reveals the world as a space opened by ethically charged human interaction. "The sciences of man and Heidegger", he states, "end either in the triumph of mathematical intelligibility, repressing the subject, the person, his uniqueness and election, into ideology, or else in the enrootedness of man in being" (1987a, 144). For Levinas, then, the essence of technology *ought* to be the ethical promise of feeding the hungry. Whether it is directed toward being or toward the other person determines for him whether technology gives itself to the anti-humanism of Heideggerian pagan enrootedness or rehabilitates a Jewish humanism.

This conclusion, of course, rests on Levinas's distinction between his nomadic ethics and the Heideggerian anti-ethics of dwelling, tied as it is to his assertion regarding a link between Heidegger's *Bodenständigkeit* and his *Volkish* support of Hitler. Indeed, in some of his notorious utterances,

Heidegger attributes what he takes to be the defective calculative Jewish skills to their prolonged unrootedness and groundlessness (GA 95, 97) and praised the German enrooted existence. Yet as Heidegger's personal affiliation with the party dwindled in the mid-1930s, and in the following years, he construes a more sophisticated account of the homely *as well as* exilic quality of modern existence. Levinas is surely correct in pointing to the enduring importance of dwelling and rootedness in a 'place' for Heidegger. Over against the technological world, Heidegger implores us to dwell in a world structured by the unified 'wrestling' of the fourfold of earth, sky, mortals and divinities; nurturing and being nurtured by our localised essence, place, and customs (Wrathall, 2011, 195-211). But this *Heimat* is not merely the soil of one's land, but a special approach or attunement to the question of being, a sense of nearness that allows the mystery of being to be present. There is, Heidegger acknowledges, a simultaneity of at-homeness and homelessness, of exile and homecoming, of rootedness and displacement in the *Heimat*, and hence it is at once *unheimlich* and a *Geheimnis*. This point is stressed in the 1940s in his lectures on Hölderlin's 'Andenken' and particularly 'Der Ister', in which Heidegger's analysis of the first choral ode from Sophocles' *Antigone* offers an in-depth investigation into the meaning of being-at-home. There he muses on the Greek word *deinon*, which he translates as *das Unheimliche*, and announces that "the saying 'the human being is the uncanniest' provides the authentic *Greek* definition of humanity [*Mensch*]" (Heidegger, 2000b, 161; Withy, 2015, 102-12; Winkler, 2017). He similarly writes that "Antigone herself is the poem of coming-to-be-at-home in not-being-at-home [*des Heimischwerdens im Unheimischsein*]". Indeed, already in *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger grants that "the 'not-at-home' must be conceived as the more primordial phenomenon" (SZ 189/ BT 234). But not only is it the case that Heidegger does not exclusively advocate for simplistic enrootedness, Levinas himself concedes some legitimacy to being-at-home when he speaks of the 'interiority of the Home' and describes the hospitality toward the Other: "I welcome the Other who presents in my home by opening my home to him" (Eubanks and Gauthier, 2001; Tijmes, 1998). Derrida's famous point (2000, 14), "I cannot offer you hospitality without saying: 'this is mine, I am at home'", comes to mind in this context.

Disrupting Dichotomies

At this point, it is worthwhile to situate Levinas's response to Heidegger within the broader context of other Jewish engagements with the German philosopher. In light of the previous chapters of this study, it becomes apparent that with regards to some central themes, Levinas response is hardly untypical. In insinuating that Heidegger's existential analysis of Dasein does not aptly portray Jewish existence; in linking this inaccuracy to a theological deficiency; in identifying it as 'paganism', a term possessing obvious negative connotations; in focusing on the theme of immanence and transcendence as the heart of this theological flaw; in conjoining the political, philosophical, and theological to make sense of Heidegger's Nazi sympathies; in posing an opposing, alternative Jewish account to contrast Heidegger; in charging the Jewish alternative with an ethical import said to be lacking in Heidegger's account; in suggesting that this Jewish alternative is instructive and pertinent to non-Jews as well; in identifying Heidegger not as a break from philosophical tradition but as its emblematic culmination; in perceiving his Jewish rejoinder to be not only the antithesis to Heideggerianism but a remedy to the overall spiritual sickness it represents -- in all these features, Levinas concurs with his contemporaries who reacted to Heidegger from a Jewishly-conscience perspective. One might say that Levinas's novelty in comparison with other Jewish intellectuals, in both his early and mature polemics, is the extent to which they are profoundly *in debt* to Heidegger. Indeed, Levinas seeks to outstrip Heidegger's innovations without altogether dismissing their cogency; his rejoinder offers an alternative from within, as it were. His emphasis on the absolute obligation for the other person accounts for and indeed presupposes Heidegger's ontology, and his vision of Judaism is correspondingly developed *through* his engagement with Heidegger; or better, he reads the one in light of the other. The result is a Heideggerian-inspired and based exposition of being-Jewish-in-the-world, further developed and incorporated into his ethics.

The crux of Levinas's critique of Heidegger's ontology, as noted, is that it repudiates otherness. On this account, the category of being in Heidegger is identical to the traditional metaphysical category of 'essence' and hence promotes 'constant presence' and is allergic to difference. This understanding, however, has elicited much opposition.[127] Heidegger repeatedly insists that being in the sense that he is

[127] This has been argued by Derrida and repeated ever since. On a specific focus on the question of the holy, see Sikka (1998).

speaking has been forgotten throughout the history of western thought and he similarly distinguishes it from the metaphysical 'essence'. Furthermore, being it is not *a* being and thus cannot be the mediating ontological concept Levinas says it is. Heidegger's understanding of being, the ontological difference, and his attempt to think its originary openness leads him to claim that the otherness to which this difference testifies is "neither an ontic nor an ontological relation" (Heidegger, 1969, 77). Levinas's conflation of Heidegger's being with 'the Same' is therefore ill-conceived.

In fact, Levinas's Other is in some important respects rather similar to Heidegger's being, which too is at once the farthest and oddly near, present but inaccessible. Levinas's vigilance against metaphysical remnants, onto-theology, and the nullification of difference is in truth an internal impulse within Heidegger's thought, present already in *Sein und Zeit* and intensified thereafter. Heidegger's ardent call for releasement [*Gelassenheit*], to let being be, is a call to curb our disposition of forcing the unfamiliar into familiar forms and cultivate a modest and respectful approach to alterity (Nancy, 2000; Raffoul, 2000; Dastur, 2014; Raffoul, 2014). Indeed, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe admits that "I have a lot of trouble not seeing in Heidegger's 'Being', if it is still Being and if it is Heidegger's Being, the same thing as (if not the very possibility of) Levinas's 'otherwise than Being'" (1998, 23). Jacques Rolland similarly contends that "the concepts of *Otherwise than Being* function according to a scheme formally identical to what governs Being in Heidegger's sense of the term" (Zarader, 2006, 146).[128] For both Levinas and Heidegger, difference demands non-indifference, though in Levinas (as in Buber and Heschel) there is a crucial personalized accent to otherness absent in the anonymity of Heidegger's being.

It is significant that we find support for the claim that Heidegger's ontology strongly signals towards what Levinas calls ethics from Levinas himself. In at least three late occasions, the Jewish-French philosopher comes close to admitting this. In "Diachrony and Representation" (1982), Levinas comments on Heidegger's 1946 "The Anaximander Fragment" in *Holzwege*, where the latter renounces metaphysical ontology of presence and reads his modification of being as *Anwesen*, in which a radical

[128] Echoing this judgment, Zarader argues that "Levinas 'forgets' all that which in Being, in Heidegger's sense, might be liable to approximate it to the Other…yet this forgetting is a decision" (2006, 145).

and irreducible absence and otherness is acknowledged, into the pre-Socratic's fragment. Recognizing what surely qualifies as an ethical moment in Heidegger, Levinas exclaims:

> "A putting into question of that 'positivity' of the *esse* in its presence, signifying – brusquely – encroachment and usurpation! Did not Heidegger, despite all he wants to teach about the priority of the 'thought of being' – here run up against the original significance of ethics?" (Levinas, 1987b, 108-9).

Similarly, Levinas's somewhat surprising defence of Heidegger against Buber's charge of monological solipsism exposes a more decisive identification of his own ethical perspective with a Heideggerian category. "Buber rises in violent opposition to the Heideggerian notion of *Fürsorge* which, to the German philosopher, would be access to Others", Levinas writes,

> "it is certainly not from Heidegger that one should take lessons on the love of man or social justice. But *Fürsorge* as response to an essential destitution accedes to the alterity of the Other. It takes into account that dimension of height and misery through which the very epiphany of others takes place" (1993, 18).

Here Levinas differentiates between Heidegger's philosophy and his personal actions. The philosophy bears witness to the ethical relation, but the philosopher has little credit in these matters. Levinas carries on and accuses Buber of abstraction and unethical monologicalism – to recall, exactly what Buber finds faulty in Heidegger: "One may wonder whether clothing the naked and feeding the hungry do not bring us closer to the neighbour than the rarefied atmosphere in which Buber's Meeting sometimes takes place" (ibid).[129]

In the third occasion, Levinas forthrightly equates his conception of responsibility with Heidegger's *Sorge*. "The central idea of my argument", he explains in an interview, "is that the other's alterity is my responsibility for him, which is heavy and evasive. The sign of being human is caring for the other – *die Sorge*, as Heidegger says" (de Saint Cheron, 2010, 36). It should be noticed that these three examples refer to both Heidegger's earlier and later writings. This indicates that Heidegger has *always* approximated the ethical sensitivity of which Levinas speaks. This observation is important for anyone who seeks to arrive at an honest judgment of Levinas's attitude towards his former teacher, but it is crucial for the interest of the present chapter, because Levinas's belated acknowledgement of the ethical

[129] Cf. Cohen (2010, 80-93).

impulse animating Heidegger's stance suggests the need to revisit the trenchant adversarial framing of ethical Judaism over against Heideggerian paganism.

It is of little surprise that Levinas does not engage in such a revision. In one occasion, however, he is somewhat ambivalent about his indictment of Heideggerian ontology as paganism. In one of the interviews he gave later in his life, he is asked: "do you think that Heidegger would make a kind of sacralization of the world, and that his thought represents a culmination of paganism?" The answer to this question would presumably be a simple affirmation, as Levinas has been arguing precisely this for decades. Yet his response is hardly straightforward (Levinas, 1991a, 117): "Whatever the case may be, he has a very great sense for everything that is part of the landscape; not the artistic landscape, but the place in which man is enrooted. It is absolutely not a philosophy of the émigré!" Levinas evokes Heidegger's proclivity towards rootedness but avoids reaffirming his steadfast identification of Heideggerianism and paganism. Does this mean he finally acknowledges the discrepancies between Heidegger and 'Levinas's Heidegger'? That his teacher's thought is closer to his own than he was previously willing to admit?[130] Is he prepared to disassociate Heidegger from paganism?

It is unlikely. Too much is at stake – philosophically and personally. Marlène Zarader attempts to explain Levinas's oversight of his proximity to Heidegger:

> "Levinas is led to mark a distance, even to exaggerate it deliberately, not in order to caricature Heidegger's thought, but on the contrary to disclose that which is most proper to it. And what is most proper to it is the absence of the only Other that might give meaning to the concept of alterity. In this sense, Heidegger's work stands farthest from the Levinasian endeavor, as also from the heritage to which the latter claims to be faithful" (2006, 146).

Zarader opines that the reason Levinas deliberately effaces their similarities is his former teacher's Godless framework, which neutralizes the concept of alterity. This core absence makes the many semblances between the two, important as they are, "absolutely negligible" (145). Yet this does not explain why Levinas does not simply state this rather than polemically deriding a strawman for decades while expressing what otherwise appears to be at the very least comparable views. Zarader's explanation also insufficiently attends to the aforementioned moments in which Levinas seems to admit to affinities

[130] 'Levinas's Heidegger' is David Boothroyd's formulation, signifying "a representative of Heidegger that functions internally within Levinas's own thesis" (1988, 17).

with Heidegger. But perhaps the main matter is that Zarader's point rests on the implicit depiction of Athens as ontotheology and Judaism as its 'other'. According to this logic, which Zarader shares with Levinas although he is less willing to acknowledge it, Heidegger is much closer to the 'Hebraic'. To accept this judgment, however, one must be willing to accept a robust 'against the grain' interpretation of Heidegger, hold a very specific understanding of what 'Hebraic' means, and be prepared to make some coarse generalizations with respect to Christianity. Additionally, it is no doubt the case that mapping the philosophies of Levinas and Heidegger onto 'Jerusalem' and 'Athens', respectively, is deeply misguided. Not only because both Levinas's philosophical works *and* his Jewish writings are 'Greek' in that they are presented in a philosophical medium as a discourse of *logos*, but also because Heidegger's philosophy simply does not concur with Levinas's description of what constitutes Athens, like the aim of objectivity, clarity, or reasoned argumentation. The philosopher who titled his collected works *Wege: Nicht Werke* is no Ulysses. But this does not mean he is Abraham either; only that, with respect to Levinas, Judaism and philosophy are not, as it is popular to say, each other's other. Once again, Levinas's dualistic disjunction between his ethical thought and Judaism on the one hand, and Heidegger's philosophy on the other hand, covers up the intricate ways in which Levinas's account is marked by Heidegger, both positively and negatively.

Coda

In Levinas's scheme, no internal development within the ego or within the world generates the revelation of the other person. The calling into question of totality comes from without, as rupture and interruption. Any predisposed presence of the wholly Other in the Same is by definition ruled out. Yet for the interruption to have an effect, for it to leave a trace, there must be - to (appropriately) borrow theological language - a *kontaktpunkt* that makes possible an interaction-in-difference between the two divided spheres. Such a point of contact is rejected by Levinas, leading to Derrida's claim (1997, 151) that with this rejection Levinas announces a "dream" of "pure thought of pure difference". But at the same time, this point of contact is also assumed in his understanding of 'religion' and ethics as a non-violating approach towards transcendence. Indeed, alongside the logic of interruption operating in Levinas there is another model of logic wherein not mutual exclusivism but dialectic of priorities and

relations is at play. Levinas's proposed reversal of traditional ontological priorities must not lead to the formation of a new totalizing ontology wherein the Other adopts the oppressing role of the Same. Levinas does not reject ontology *per say*, but rather only the totalizing and deifying propensity of its self-perception as first philosophy. Binary expositions are deceptive. Ontology, the Same, philosophy, are not invalidated, only churned up by an ethical shift. It is for this reason that describing Levinas's contention with Heidegger as a dispute over the question of primacy between ontology and ethics as 'first philosophy' is problematic. For according to Levinas's logic - and, in truth, also Heidegger's - the very conception of first philosophy can all too easily operate as a violent site of metaphysical fundamentalism (Murphey, 2014). The counter-ontology that Levinas calls 'metaphysics' consists of both Athens and Jerusalem, totality and infinity, being and otherwise than being, ethics and justice, the Saying and the Said, philosophy and scepticism (Handelman, 1991, 324). When asked, "is transcendence inseparable from immanence?", Levinas replies: "absolutely" (de Saint Cheron, 2010, 33). Thus, even if Heidegger is misinterpreted by Levinas as a paragon of totality, it is still not disjunction but dialectical sublation that defines their philosophical relations. J' and Dasein are not mutually exclusive.

It is ultimately also the logic of dialectics that serves Levinas's aim of opening Greek thought to the philosophical contributions of the Jewish monotheistic perspective as he understood it. Judaism's universal vocation hinges on the possibility of the interaction of its otherness with the world. Without it, the statements about the human soul being naturally Jewish, or that a Jew is not a particularity but a modality of being, are empty. Levinas states that in his philosophy, Hebrew is the content and Greek the form; Greek needs Hebrew for it to be meaningful and Hebrew needs Greece to expose its universalism (Kearney, 1984, 57; Levinas, 1994c, 147). Ultimately, then, Levinas proposes an *Aufhebung*, a sublation and modification of totality in relation to infinity, of being in relation to its beyond, which, in order to sustain this fragile relation and not proceed to a higher synthesis of a new Same, must deconstruct itself and collapse, over and over again. Derrida is therefore correct that Levinas is, and must be, "Jewgreek. Greekjew".

Conclusion: Which God will Save Us? Heidegger and Judaism

> "Only a great thinker can help us in our plight. But here is the great trouble: the only great thinker in our time is Heidegger" (Strauss, 1989b, 28).

Heidegger and Judaism: *Auseinandersetzung*

In the present study I have aimed to show that a central prism through which twentieth century Jewish thinkers read Heidegger's work was a religious one. From immediately after the publication of *Sein und Zeit* and ever since, leading Jewish thinkers have transgressed Heidegger's objection to confessional readings of his philosophy and engaged with it as a provocation and challenge to Judaism. Denying his self-professed theological neutrality, Heidegger's philosophy is read as both deriving from and promoting repudiated religious positions. He is associated with Christianity in general, Protestantism, secularism, atheism, Paganism, or Gnosticism – all of which are disavowed from a Jewish standpoint. As we have seen, time and again, the overarching spiritual, cultural, and political crisis associated with Heidegger is tied to theological deficiencies embedded in his philosophy. The absolutization of immanence, depiction of a godless world, secularized Christian theological categories, or invocation of the 'gods', are seen as inextricably connected to Heidegger's blunder.

Not unlike Heidegger's conceptualization of his own thought vis-à-vis Judaism, a confrontational mentality hovers over the Jewish receptions of his thought. Judaism is not only claimed to stand in opposition to Heidegger's thought and the deficient religious categories associated with it, it also serves as its spiritual and moral antidote. In the minds of leading Jewish thinkers of the previous century, Judaism is posited as *the* alternative to Heidegger and the comprehensive crisis his philosophy represents. Heidegger is recognized as a thinker of historical rank whose philosophy must be addressed, and at the same time he is portrayed as the 'negative' to the constructive task of each thinker discussed in the study. He represents irrationalism in a world in need of rational order; a godless worldview in a world in need of God; the monological existence in a world in need of dialogue; the totalitarianism of the Same in a world in need of respect for otherness; historicism and relativism in a world in need of enduring truth; world-denial in a world in need of world-affirmation; or the paganism of a disinterested

God in a world in need of divine care. The Judaism-Heidegger opposition is played out differently in each case; and, indeed, a different Heidegger is confronted with a different Judaism. Yet one thing remains fixed amidst the many Heideggers and Judaisms: that the relation between them is that of opposition. Through this polemical engagement with Heidegger, the Jewish thinkers discussed in this study self-assert and implicitly advocate for the legitimacy of Judaism in the modern world. In this confrontational positioning, Judaism is constructed as the messianic and Heidegger, correspondingly, as the apocalyptic. Yet despite the dichotomizing model, I have argued that these Jewish thinkers shared with Heidegger significant philosophical assumptions and their thought was forged in a similar intellectual matrix. Despite their aversion, Heidegger himself was often a crucial source for their own philosophical and religious reflections. Thus, a crucial factor in the Jewish engagements with Heidegger is to define themselves as antithetical to him while at the same time ladling from common conceptual wells, and even drawing directly from Heidegger himself.

In this respect, the intellectual encounter we have been tracing is not only a Jewish moment, but also, and significantly, a European and German episode. Or, put differently: what emerges is that some of the symbolic binaries animating this polemical exchange, such as the German/Jew and Athens/Jerusalem polarities, are overly simplified. This can be demonstrated through the example of the narratives of 'historical forgetfulness' and 'progress as return' that is employed by both Heidegger and the Jewish reactions to his thought. Following the outline of nineteenth century German historicism, Heidegger structures the history of being according to the threefold (and deeply religious) model of origin, fall, and restoration. This structure allows him to speak of the intimacy of the Greek poetic openness to being and his envisioned Germany, *das Land der Dichter und Denker*. In a comparable manner, the tripartite historical structure features largely in the Jewish alternative. Here, it is not the revival of Athens and the Greek pre-Socratics, but of Jerusalem and the biblical prophets. This is featured, as we have seen, in Cassirer, Strauss, Buber, Heschel, Levinas, and others. In this regard, it is telling that while the backdrop of this entire episode is the breakdown of the synthesizing model of liberal Judaism, the prominent and recurring featuring of the prophets to counter Heidegger, together with the almost uncontested assumption that the prophetic moment represents the normative heart of

Judaism, attests to the lasting legacy of liberal Judaism, and also of the Christian world through and against which it developed some of its definitive traits. Indeed, the critical and apologetic inflection of the encounter with Heidegger is highlighted when one considers that in positing the Hebrew prophets as possessing the kernel of the Jewish alternative to Heidegger, the nineteenth century apologetic Jewish effort to reclaim the prophets from the hands of liberal Protestantism who perceived them as the first stage in the Christian supersession of Judaism is extended deep into the twentieth century.

This critical while apologetic impulse is further emphasised through another recurring theme in this encounter: that of secularization. As illustrated, Heidegger's roots in theology and the barely-supressed religiosity he promotes in an otherwise secular context directed attention to the dialectic of continuity and break from religious tradition that marks his thought. Heidegger's problematic as a whole is driven by the attempt to rethink tradition by thinking *against* it, from *within* it, and *through* it. But how does one go against one's own tradition when one's hermeneutic circularity is recognized, that is, when one accepts that thought is always situated within a history, community, language, and heritage? This is a tension-fraught attempt, and Heidegger understood this better than most. Throughout the chapters of this study I have argued that the Jewish encounter with Heidegger reflects a critical encounter with modernity and the theological structures informing it. As we have seen, there is an overarching denunciation of Heidegger's claim for neutrality and an emphasis on the religiously-charged features of his secularized philosophy. And if, as the thinkers examined in this study repeatedly argued, Heidegger embodies the gist of modern thought, then it follows that modernity is a religiously-charged project and not a self-standing historical epoch detached from and contrasted to previous theological worldviews. And insofar as the modern predicament is rooted in a deficient religious grounding, its remedy must similarly be religious. Stated otherwise: insofar as it is the presuppositions of a specific theological framework that made possible and facilitated the ills of modern life - above all, secularism and totalitarianism - then only an alternative religious framework, one which is not susceptible to the lesions of modern secularism, can offer an apt antidote. As we have seen, the predominant yet tacit conviction repeated throughout this study is that the Jewish heritage offers the much-needed corrective to the spiritual crisis of the present. What reverberates from the Jewish responses to Heidegger,

therefore, is a critique of the theologico-political presumptions of modernity, one which seeks to propose an avenue for an alternative *kind* of modernity, a Jewish modernity (Svenungsson, 2014).

The Jewish responses to Heidegger reflect then more than a critical encounter with a challenging philosopher. They reflect an ongoing wrestling with the broken promises of emancipation and the perception that both modern secularism and Nazism are outcomes of the political-theological premises of the modern project, and of western tradition more generally. In this sense, the Jewish reception of Heidegger encompasses the predicament of modern Jewish existence, with its hopes, disillusionment, tragedies and attempts of reconstruction.

We have repeatedly encountered the leitmotiv of the Athens and Jerusalem. As noted, while ostensibly denoting a duality, this convenient structure often entails the trinary of Judaism, Christianity, and paganism in the context of the Christian – Jewish polemic over *Verus Israel*. Since the Jewish encounter with Heidegger takes place as part of the Jewish exchange with Christianity and in the context of the advent of modern secularism ('paganism'), there is little surprise that the trinal application of the Athens and Jerusalem model is dominant. Significantly, also Heidegger makes use of this paradigm when he objects to the monotheistic worldview he associates with Christianity and Judaism and identifies in ancient Greece a pregnant ontological moment. However, the shortcomings of this simplified binary are manifested in the various Jewish responses to Heidegger. For not only do 'Athens' and 'Jerusalem' mean different things in each case, but the dichotomous separation between the two, so crucial to the argument, is often unsustainable, and the parallels, moments of agreement, and even overlaps between the two are inevitably admitted. Indeed, the instability of these signifiers is reflected in the fact that often what is constructed as 'Jewish' is also disturbingly found in Heidegger's thought.

Here a final point should be made. The present study has sketched and critically analysed salient encounters of twentieth century Jewish thinkers with Heidegger's philosophy. These encounters are deeply responsive to the specific social, political, and conceptual conditions within which they are situated, and hence are primarily of a polemical and apologetic character. They are also focused on and directed against certain elements of Heidegger's philosophy, limited to the perspective, understandings, and misunderstandings of their time, and possessing a particular, if not always openly transparent,

objective and aim. In this respect, the Jewish receptions of Heidegger's philosophy outlined above are the first chapter of a story that is very much unfolding before our eyes.

However, more recently, the mirror image of the antithetical model of Judaism versus Heidegger has emerged. This perspective may be termed the 'Jewish Heidegger'. It has been insinuated already in 1955 by Paul Ricoeur and has since steadily gained currency (Zarader, 1996, 9; Gordon, 2003, 313-4; Rosen, 1987, 162; Caputo, 2000, 88; Fleischacker, 2008, 1-27; Fagenblat, 2014b). Most often, the springboard of this perspective is a predominant construction of the Athens-Jerusalem formula, according to which Heidegger's denunciation of the abstract in favour of the concrete, the a-temporal in favour of the historical, the static in favour of the transient, the eternal in favour of the finite, and the celestial in favour of the worldly, situates his thought on the side of Jerusalem. From early on, he has sought an originary mode of being-in-the-world uncontaminated by Greek metaphysics. While Heidegger's neglect of Jewish tradition is blatant, has he not receded so far back in his search for another beginning that he effectively stepped *out* of the Greek – and into the Hebraic? Does not his rejection of the ontotheological God of philosophers lead him to the proximity of the living God of Abraham? The most comprehensive and sophisticated work in this regard is Zarader's *The Unthought Debt: Heidegger and the Hebraic Heritage*, where she exposes what she takes to be many correspondences between Heideggerian ideas and the Jewish world of content, the 'Hebraic tradition'. Since Heidegger all but ignores Judaism, Zarader makes the provocative argument that the Hebraic tradition constitutes the 'unthought' of Heidegger's philosophy. And since for Heidegger the 'unthought' is the background assumption and conceptual systems that philosophers take for granted and conceal by way of the disclosure of their thought - a negativity indicative of a positivity - Zarader effectively inserts Judaism, by means of its concealment, into the very heart of Heidegger's programme.[131]

Yet the avenue of the 'Jewish Heidegger' should be resisted. Overturning the image of Heidegger the Jew-hater with the mirror image of Heidegger the closet-Jew, as it were, is suspect. Not only does it depend on reductive logic and an oversimplified construction of the Athens-Jerusalem paradigm, it

[131] Derrida, who is criticized by Zarader, states: "Basically I think she is right […] what Zarader says is, on the whole, convincing" (Janicaud, 2015, 273-277, 358).

perpetuates the deeply allosemitic composition of the entire discussion, wherein the Jews and Judaism are conceived as prioritized others, for good or for ill. Paradoxically, the rendition of the 'Jewish Heidegger' continues the apologetic trend outlined above in its situating a construction of Judaism as pre-, post-, or a-metaphysics, outside the clutches of a 'Greek' ontotheology of presence. Heidegger's thought can and should be critically, constructively, or comparatively engaged without undergoing a forced conversion to Judaism. A more balanced Jewish engagement with Heidegger, one that is neither primarily polemical nor apologetic, one that neither ignores his political failings nor reduces his entire thought to these failings, is therefore called for.[132]

[132] Some initial studies in this direction are Lapidot (2016); Scult (2004), (2007), and (2008); as well as Wolfson (2005), (2006), and (2017).

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